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THE INDEPENDENT

Wednesday 8 October 1997 (R50p) 45p No 3,422

INSIDE TODAY

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Andrew Marr on our
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man of the movies

TODAY'S NEWS

Artificial skin on sale

Laboratory-grown human skin which is already on sale heralds the start of a new era in transplant surgery, with a variety of artificially grown body parts, including heart muscles, coming on to the market. "This is not science fiction," said one of the inventors responsible. Page 13

Tory wit and wisdom

The attempt by the new Tory leader William Hague to present his party as a forward-looking, intellectually invigorated force wasn't greatly helped by two older Tories yesterday. Lord Tebbit attacked multiculturalism as divisive and suggested immigrant families had to be loyal to one culture only, or "they will forever be foreigners holding British passports and this kingdom will become a Yugoslavia". Not to be outdone, Alan Clark MP, who has been presenting a television history of the Tory Party, suggested all members of the IRA should be lined up against a wall and shot. Mr Hague, who visited the Notting Hill carnival as one of his first acts as leader, later rebuked Lord Tebbit by saying he wanted a multicultural party. Page 4

Pensions above £100

The state married couple's pension is to rise above £100 a week for the first time. The reason? Simply that September's inflation rate of 3.6 per cent is used to uprate many benefits. The change will happen from April. Home-owners, though, have little reason to cheer: the Bank of England is likely to raise interest rates again before long to keep underlying inflation on course for the Government's target. Page 24

Kids' cartoon threat

Imported American cartoons, delivered in huge quantities through satellite and cable television, are changing British childhood tastes, according to a conference held in London yesterday. They are now the dominant type of children's programme on television, squeezing out traditional dramas and factual programmes, the Broadcasting Standards Commission told a meeting of the lobby group Voice of the Listener and Viewer. Page 3

Irish minister goes

Ray Burke, the Irish foreign minister and co-sponsor of the Northern Ireland talks, was yesterday forced to resign, just as they reached a crucial stage. He had been under siege for weeks after admitting taking £30,000 in cash in 1989 when a business associate was seeking planning permissions in Dublin. Page 8

SEEN & HEARD

Do you look like a human haystack and have some spare time? West Midlands Police are appealing for 12 men who look like members of American rock group ZZ Top to take part in an identity parade. They said volunteers should have long beards, preferably hanging down to their waists, and ponytails. A police spokeswoman said: "Apparently the volunteers are to be likened to band members of ZZ Top who I understand look like this." Expenses will be paid and anyone interested should contact Birmingham's Bridge Street West ID Suite.

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TELEVISION The Eye, page 12
CROSSWORDS Page 32 and
the Eye, page 9

Web address: <http://www.independent.co.uk>

A paparazzi ban? That'll save us money, sneers Rupert Murdoch



Rupert Murdoch yesterday declared that the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, would save his world-wide media operation a lot of money because his papers would no longer have to pay exorbitant fees for photographs taken by paparazzi. He was dismissive when asked if he regretted buying intrusive pictures of Diana for his papers. "Oh, I think news-

papers paid far too much for them," he replied. "We'll have a major cost saving if we can get rid of this crew." Speaking to the annual meeting of his parent group News Corporation in Adelaide, he went on to dissociate himself from the accusations of Earl Spencer, Diana's brother, that newspapers like his had hounded Diana to her death. "There were un-

doubtedly... I don't want to throw stones in glass houses, but I would certainly say that we were by no means the worst offenders and that Princess Diana, whom we all had the greatest respect for, generally worked with the photographers to her satisfaction." He called on those who argued that the solution was tougher privacy laws to be careful. "When

we get into this talk of privacy laws, it's to see if we can get a new privilege for the already privileged," he said. "It should be resisted, I think, by all journalists and all people involved in publishing and television. Privacy laws are for the protection of people who are already privileged." TV lobby, page 24

Photograph: Matt Turner/Reuters

CJD could be spread by blood transfusions

Could blood transfusions accelerate the spread of CJD in the human population? And if, as some scientists fear, they could, our Environment Correspondent asks what could be done to minimise the risk

Some senior scientists fear that there is a real possibility that the new variant of the lethal brain affliction Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) caused by mad cow disease could pass through the population via blood transfusions.

The Government must urgently consider removing white blood cells, a potential source of infectivity, from donated blood, they say. But that would add at least £50m to the costs of blood transfusions. The Government says the risks of infection is "negligible" but unknown. Research is being commissioned to try to pin it down. "If you don't have proof, then you have to say there is a possibility," the Department of Health said yesterday.

The scientists' fears emerged at a conference this week organised by one of Britain's research councils. It was held under "Chatham House" rules, which means that those attending - including *The Independent* - cannot disclose the identity of speakers or give details of the meeting.

"The processes we are going through today, such as blood transfusion, could amplify a disaster lurking behind the scenes," said a genetics professor. "One could make the argument that removing white blood cells [from donated blood] should be done in anticipation."

The conference was held as the Department of Health revealed plans to keep track, in secret, of all those who have re-

ceived blood from four donors who later became ill with new variant CJD (v-CJD), the human version of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). The department said the recipients of the blood would not be told because it did not want to cause an unnecessary panic. There have been 21 victims of v-CJD, and only one is still alive.

Scientists are worried because, in experiments in which mice have been infected with BSE, it has been shown that the agent which carries the infection becomes established first of all in glands which make and harbour white blood cells, such as the spleen and lymph nodes. Furthermore, the amount of infectivity in these glands builds up at time passes. Lat-

BY NICHOLAS SCHOON

er on the agent moves into the brain and spinal cord, where it causes the disease. Experiments on mice have also indicated that blood can carry the infective agent, a mutant protein. But the infection can only pass from one animal to another when the blood is injected into the brain. Blood-to-blood transfusions have not been witnessed to transmit the disease.

There are grounds to hope the risk from transfusions is extremely low or non-existent. For years, scientists have been searching to find out whether blood donations from people who later went on to contract "classic CJD" had ever passed the disease to those who received transfusions.

Classic CJD has been killing a small number of people each year long before

v-CJD came on the scene. So far, studies have not found a single instance when a blood transfusion passed the infection on.

But these findings provide no absolute guarantee of safety. First, v-CJD has some different properties from classic CJD, which may alter its infectivity. Second, there is the sheer scale of blood transfusions, and the fact that an unknown number of perfectly healthy looking people are incubating v-CJD. There is no way of preventing them from donating blood, because there is no test which shows whether the agent is in people in the early stages of the disease, or when they are incubating it.

Concerned scientists point to parallels with the opening years of the Aids pandemic in the early Eighties. At the time, there was no blood test which could demonstrate the presence of the HIV virus in blood. The authorities said the risk to haemophiliacs from stopping transfusions of the clotting agent Factor VIII far outweighed the risk of contracting Aids. Yet, subsequently, thousands of haemophiliacs were killed by Aids due to them receiving contaminated Factor VIII.

The Government avoids outright claims that transfusions are completely safe. Chief Medical Officer Sir Kenneth Calman said: "Any negligible risk of new variant CJD transmission is heavily outweighed by the immediate benefit [of blood transfusions]. For many, that will mean saving their life."

There are 2.5 million blood donations a year and about 800,000 patients receive transfusions. The blood is separated into red blood cells, platelets (which help blood to clot), and plasma. Plasma is mixed with plasma from other donors and products derived from the plasma of one donor can be transfused into many patients.

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COLUMN ONE

Ballet Blitz as Cinderella wages war on convention



FIRST NIGHT Cinderella did go to the ball — on a motorbike; the corps de ballet didn't wear tutus, but they did wear gas masks. There have been many claims to be the new "new rock 'n' roll" — comedy, cinema, even occasionally rock 'n' roll. But now there is the most surprising contender of all: ballet. Last night at London's Piccadilly Theatre the radically innovative company Adventures In Motion Pictures (AMP) staged *Cinderella*. There was *Cinderella* the ballet (excellent); *Cinderella* the T-shirt (price: a little more than a glass slipper); and *Cinderella* the £70,000 themed first night party in Forties fashions at the Savoy (Prokofiev drink your heart out).

The contemporary dance troupe was led for this production by Royal Ballet stars present and past — the ethereal Sarah Wilder, dashing young icon Adam Cooper, and legendary mature icon Lynn Seymour. The story was set in this Blitz, with Cinders falling for a wounded RAF pilot.

The show was splattered with spectacle and, special effects and dazzling choreography from AMP's Matthew Bourne. The result: £1m advance bookings at the box office, a young audience, merchandising a plenty and a full West End theatre.

For the present stars of the Royal Ballet watching from the stalls, there was a slightly bitter irony. They can see that for the best dancers, the audience-grabbing AMP (which featured all male swans and plenty of leather in Swan Lake last year) knows it will get the best by recruiting from the Royal Ballet.

But while their former colleagues played to a packed house last night, the Royal Ballet is currently losing the battle to fill the auditorium over at Hammersmith thanks to crassly misjudged management decisions by the Royal Opera House on where the company's temporary home should be, and choosing one lacking any claim to grandeur.

Perhaps, though, there is more to it than location. AMP has lessons for both contemporary dance (it always ensures there is a narrative to its works to help the audience) and classical ballet. Bourne is very much director as well as choreographer, whereas the role of director is curiously lacking in so much ballet.

While he never messes with the music or the essence of a classical story, he insists on drama — last night's ballet being set in the Blitz with its effects on the characters — and humour, such as Cinderella fantasising about her dream bomber pilot prince, and the real thing is too timid to give her a kiss.

And then there is the marketing. Katharine Doré who co-runs AMP has concentrated her marketing on a database of theatre- and cinema-goers and not the traditional ballet audience.

"There are so many people who don't consider going to ballet," she says. "They think it will be over their heads. But our work is so visual and we bring in an audience who go to cinema. There's been an immense sea change in what audiences want over the last couple of years. Audiences want to be challenged but the work has to be delivered in an accessible way."

AMP achieved that double objective last night, and the country's great classical companies will look at their box office figures and may now decide to mix more of the challenging and accessible with the time honoured and traditional.

— David Lister, Arts News Editor

PEOPLE



Down to earth: Michael Foale with his children Jenna and Ian

Father and child reunion for Mir astronaut

British-born astronaut Michael Foale tucked into a pizza he had ordered from outer space — "everything on it, but hold the anchovies" — early yesterday after landing safely at Cape Canaveral, Florida, on the shuttle *Atlantis* from a 145-day space odyssey.

Watched by his wife Rhonda and grabbing his daughter Jenna, 7, and son Ian, 3, for both hugs and balance, he said he planned to spend his first day back getting his "earth legs" after the gravity-free environment on board the Russian space station *Mir*. "His legs feel like weights. It's very hard putting one foot in front of the other," his mother Mary said from his parents' home in Cambridge.

Who delivered the 40-year-old astrophysicist's pizza was not immediately known, but back in Britain, Pizza Hut marketers were quick to spot the potential and offered him £20,000 to advertise their product. "We feel he has star quality," a Pizza Hut spokesman said, adding with no hint of irony: "The sky's the limit for Michael."

No hint of irony either from his father, 67-year-old Air Commodore Colin Foale, who said the whole family was "over the moon". "He joins a hall of heroes now. I have been told Nasa believes he was

the right man in the right place for this particular mission," Air Commodore Foale added.

The astronaut may have been born in Britain but he looked as American as the chocolate chip cookies he had wolfed down as post-pizza dessert when he appeared before reporters in a stars-and-stripes baseball cap yesterday. "I am very glad to be holding these children," he said. "Ian has grown to twice his size. You've become a rebel," he added, grinning at his sleepy son. "Jenna has become a little lady," he said. When his daughter squealed with delight, he added: "sometimes".

"I feel not particularly heavy, but a little uncertain in terms of walking and balance. I miss the breeze. I want to get strong enough to be able to go outside and walk. That's going to be my goal for the next day."

Foale was visibly upset when asked in a television interview about the *Mir*'s collision in July with a re-supply craft, widely blamed on the *Mir*'s then commander Vasily Tsibilyev. "He felt responsible for the whole accident," Foale said, "which I don't quite feel." Shaking his head and looking down, he added: "No, this is too hard to talk about."

— Phil Davison, Miami

Bill Gates backs Blair's computer crusade

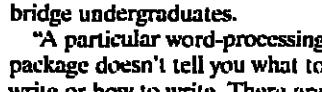
Bill Gates, the multi-billionaire head of Microsoft yesterday promised the Prime Minister advice and involvement but no money in the Government's crusade to connect every pupil to the Internet.

Mr Blair announced £100m to update school computers and software as he launched the national grid for learning.

The aim is to connect all 32,000 British schools to the grid, which will be like a giant website, by 2002. At present only 6,000 have access to the Internet.

The grid will offer teachers lesson materials, advice on planning and educational software. Eventually, pupils may be able to access worldwide information for their history homework and to take part in science experiments involving space technology which would be impossible in the classroom.

However, Mr Gates (pictured above) denied that Microsoft's participation in the National Teaching Grid was aimed at inculcating a new generation of British computer users in his company's software. "People will make their buying decisions independent of what's there," he said before the lecture to Cambridge undergraduates.



bridge undergraduates.

"A particular word-processing package doesn't tell you what to write or how to write. There are authors who use word processors and there are authors who use pen and paper, and that's fine."

Ministers are currently examining ways in which schools will be able to prevent pupils using the new computers to look at unsuitable material such as pornography. Ways of blocking such material already exist, officials said.

Though private companies will

supply software for the grid, the Government will ensure that the quality is controlled.

Mr Blair, who visited a computer class at Holland Park comprehensive school in west London, told pupils he had been talking to "the guy who runs Microsoft" and had discussed how all libraries could be wired to the Internet.

He said: "If we want the best educated and skilled workforce then we have to use the new technology ..."

"We are engaged with a whole series of people. Not just people like Bill Gates but our own companies here in this country."

Teachers fear that more information technology will distract from literacy, and in Brighton the Princess Royal told the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference of top public schools that there was more to education to computers. "Information technology is not the answer to education in the sense of people understanding basic skills."

Though computers allowed children to acquire unprecedented amounts of information, only teachers could turn that information into knowledge by showing its relevance to their lives.

— Judith Judd, Education Editor

UPDATE

TRAVEL

Airlines suffering more flight delays

Airlines have threatened to take the Civil Aviation Authority, the industry regulator, to court over the publication of punctuality statistics, officials said yesterday.

"We have to check all the details extremely carefully," Staci Abraham, chief statistician at the CAA, said. "Some carriers have told us they will seek legal redress if we publish. Which is why when we do, the figures are right."

Fewer than half (49 per cent) of holiday flights in and out of the UK's 10 major airports were on time in the April to June 1997 period, the CAA revealed — a worse performance than the 52 per cent on-time figure for April to June 1996. And with the number of flights constantly increasing, the situation is unlikely to improve. "Delays will increase, and with charters, once a flight gets delayed, it's very difficult for that plane to get back on time again," said Mr Abraham. Scheduled service flights were also suffering. Nearly 75 per cent were on time during this period compared with 80 per cent on time in the three months from April 1996. At Gatwick, the UK's busiest holiday airport, only 42 per cent of total charter flights and only 40 per cent of European charters were on time.

— Randeep Ramesh, Transport Correspondent

MOTORING

Tailgating drivers top 'hate-list'



Drivers getting too close to the car in front are most likely to make motorists angry, according to a survey released yesterday. They also strongly objected to seeing other drivers using mobile phones while they are driving.

The survey, from breakdown company Autonation Rescue, based on a sample of 1,000 people, showed that 66 per cent of motorists dislike "tailgating" — when the motorist behind drives too close — and a further 57 per cent were angered by drivers who used mobile phones while on the move. Other pet hates included: motorists who drove with their fog lights on when they were not needed (39 per cent); loud music being played with windows wide open (38 per cent); and motorists who always drove in the middle lane of a motorway (36 per cent).

"What is encouraging is that two of the most dangerous driving techniques — tailgating and mobile phone use — are at the very head of our survey," said Autonation Rescue marketing manager Roman Hart. "Certainly, many accidents would be avoided on Britain's busy roads if motorists stopped taking unnecessary risks."

SHOPPING

Safeway scores in wine department

Safeway has named Supermarket Wine Retailer of the year in a new guide for buyers.

The *Which? Wine Guide* praises the supermarket's range of 400 wines and its Eastern European selection in particular. "Safeway's combination of innovation and enthusiasm shines through even at a time when the range in nearly all of Britain's supermarkets is better than it has been for many years," the guide says. Wine Merchant of the Year is Oddbins, for the fourth year running; the guide says it "continues to find inspiration" setting it above the rest. Mail-order wine services also get the thumbs-up for offering good quality wines and some interesting bottles.

However, despite signs that Britons are becoming more adventurous in their choices, the guide says they are still too stingy when it comes to price. On average, drinkers in Britain spend £3.60 on a bottle of wine, akin to buying a "second-hand Ford Sierra" when you could have a luxury model car.

PRISONS

Jail regime condemned as appalling

Mentally ill inmates are being locked in their cells for up to 19 hours a day in "disgraceful" conditions at a jail visited by Sir David Ramsbotham, the chief inspector of prisons.

The health-care centre at Parkhurst prison, the scene of a break out in 1995 when three lifers escaped from the jail on the Isle of Wight, was severely criticised in the report published yesterday. Sir David said: "The regime for patients, particularly those with mental health disorders, is not only unacceptable it is punitive and more akin to that found in segregation units. This regime must cease immediately." He added that he was amazed the Prison Service had allowed such an "appalling regime" to continue at the secure category B jail because they had been criticised as long ago as 1994.

— Jason Bennett, Crime Correspondent

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It's what you want to know

Why Sir Paul prefers McCartney

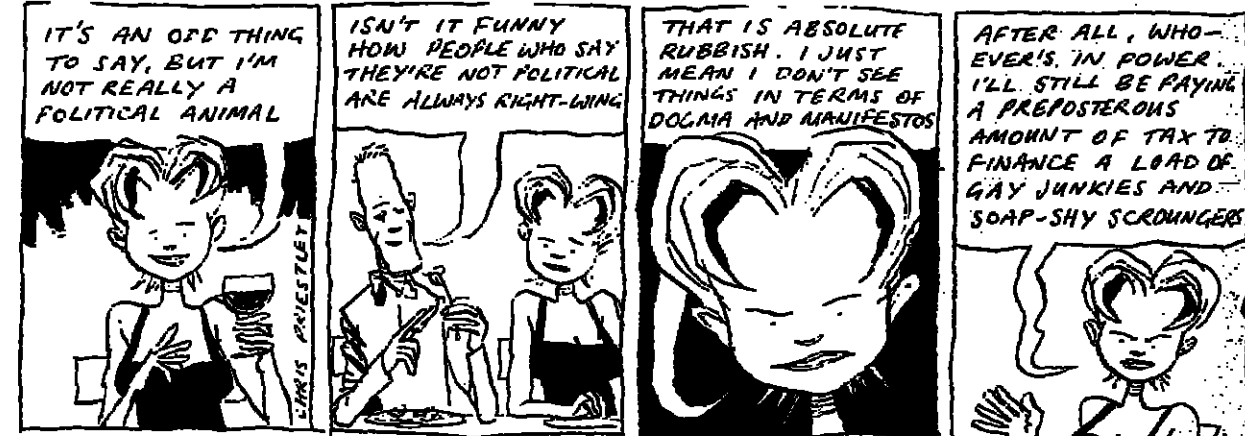
Being called "Sir" makes Paul McCartney cringe and he considered turning down his knighthood. The former Beatle refuses to use the title or headed paper with it on, bought for him by his wife, Linda. Sir Paul, 55, believes John Lennon would have been embarrassed by a title and would have sent it back, he says in an interview with *Radio Times* magazine.

Oasis are "very derivative, but they swing OK and they think they're marvellous," he says. "I did a charity session with one of them and it reminded me a little of the Beatles recordings although, with more drugs and booze. We preferred to work straight and party afterwards."

He says of his knighthood: "To me the problem was how much it would change my life, not whether it was a royalist gesture. I don't take it that seriously. It's a great honour but I'm intelligent enough to find it easy to be cynical about these things — bring people down from Rotherham, bung them an MBE, costs you virtually nothing and they return home happy."

His new 75-minute orchestral work, *Standing Stone*, is to be broadcast on Classic FM radio next Tuesday.

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by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

by Chris Priestley

3/LEADING STORIES

THE INDEPENDENT
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Nanny is portrayed as a pitiless killer

Louise Woodward listened tremulously to a tape-recording of the emergency call she made when baby Matthew Eappen went into convulsions. David Osborne was in court in Boston on the first day of her trial on first degree murder charges.

The 19-year-old British nanny facing first degree murder charges in Boston in the death last February of the baby boy in her charge, Matthew Eappen, was portrayed by prosecutors yesterday as a pitiless killer who had inflicted injuries on the child that were "extremely atrocious and cruel".

In vivid opening statements, assistant district attorney Gerry Leone repeatedly told jurors that the eight-month-old child had become incapacitated and died days later in hospital because of "injuries caused by violent slamming against a hard surface."

Previewing a case for the prosecution, which will describe a young nanny at the end of her tether with a child who would not settle, Mr Leone said that the injury had been inflicted in the bathroom of the family home. Matthew's parents, Deborah and Sunil Eappen, are both doctors. The "slamming" of the child's head, he said, was an

"action that anyone would know would cause a little eight-month-old boy to die."

A tape-recording of Louise, apparently in a state of panic, ringing the emergency services was entered as a first exhibit by the prosecution. Pleading for assistance, she was heard to say: "Help ... he's making gurgling noises ... help, what should I do? ... I think he puked. His face is going violet ... Oh, my God."

For the defence, Andrew Good said he would demon-

strate over the course of the trial, that may last three weeks, that Matthew in fact died from injuries that had been sustained, but not detected, in days prior to the day in question. "When they say what happened, they will not be able to prove it happened," Mr Good said.

Also on the defence bench was Barry Scheck, one of America's best-known lawyers, who made headlines as part of O J Simpson's so-called "dream team" of defenders.

If they fail to avert a guilty sentence for Miss Woodward, she could face a sentence of life imprisonment without parole.

Countering an assertion by the prosecution that Matthew had suffered injuries commensurate with falling onto his head from a first floor window, Mr Good said this would be shown to have been impossible. Such a trauma, he said, would surely have left the head "smashed and destroyed", whereas on his admission to

hospital Matthew showed no external signs of injury. "not a mark on him".

The defence will argue that an earlier injury caused a slow leaking of blood vessels in Matthew's head that eventually created the pressure that led to his death. To support their case, the defence will present several medical experts and will also attempt to show that Matthew had a fractured wrist, also apparently sustained several days before 4 February.

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IN THE
INDEPENDENT
TOMORROW



Eve Arnold:
truth lies and
the camera



Architecture:
Newcastle,
the cutting
edge city

Hard labour:
Miscarriage
threat of the
35-hour week



Rolf Harris:
It's only vet 'n'
roll, but we
like it

So many cartoons on TV it's not funny

British children are watching so many American cartoons some think 911 is the number for our emergency services. Paul McCann, Media Correspondent, looks at the threats to children's television that some think could damage our culture.

Imported American cartoons, the growth in satellite and cable television, changing childhood tastes and cost-cutting at the BBC and ITV are threatening the quality of children's television according to an industry conference held in London yesterday.

Cartoons are now the dominant type of children's programme on television, squeezing out traditional dramas and factual programmes, the Broadcasting Standards Commission revealed to a meeting of the lobby group Voice of the Listener and Viewer.

Animation now accounts for one-third of all children's programmes, compared with 25 per cent five years ago and just 10 per cent in 1981.

The conference was told by Michael Forte, Carlton Television's head of children's programmes, that the increase in animation is due to the "blanket bombing" of British television by American broadcasters with massive libraries of cartoons. "It is the broadcasting equivalent of plutonium dumping," he said.

Mr Forte called on Chris Smith, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, to help "ring-fence" budgets for more diverse children's programmes like drama and factual shows.

Anna Home, the highly respected outgoing head of children's television at the BBC, echoed his concern. She admitted that the money is no longer available to make dramas like the classic Seventies series *Moonlight* unless joint funding can be found from overseas broadcasters.

"High quality drama is under pressure because it is so expensive," she said. "Drama allows you to make fantasy, but thanks to Spielberg you have to invest huge amounts to make special effects."

Ms Home is also concerned that joint-funding by overseas programmes will mean Britain stops making indigenous dramas relevant to our culture.

Dan Maddicott, director of children's programmes for ITV company United News & Media, revealed that five of ITV's recent major children's dramas had been made with overseas funding, including the quintessentially British *Famous Five*, which would not have been made if Enid Blyton was not popular with German children.

Jocelyn Hay, chairman of the Voice of the Listener and Viewer, underlined the threat to Britain's culture by recalling a visit to the Labour MP Diane Abbott made to a school in the London area where children could recall 911, the American emergency services number, but did not know about 999.

While the BBC children's programming budget has fallen and ITV's has stood still over the last five years, six channels dedicated to children have launched on cable and satellite television.

The latest research by the Independent Television Commission shows that while 24 per cent of all homes have cable or satellite television, 39 per cent of those homes with children are connected.

In those homes 51 per cent of viewing would now be to channels like Nickelodeon, the Cartoon network or Fox Kids which all rely heavily on imported American programmes and cartoons.

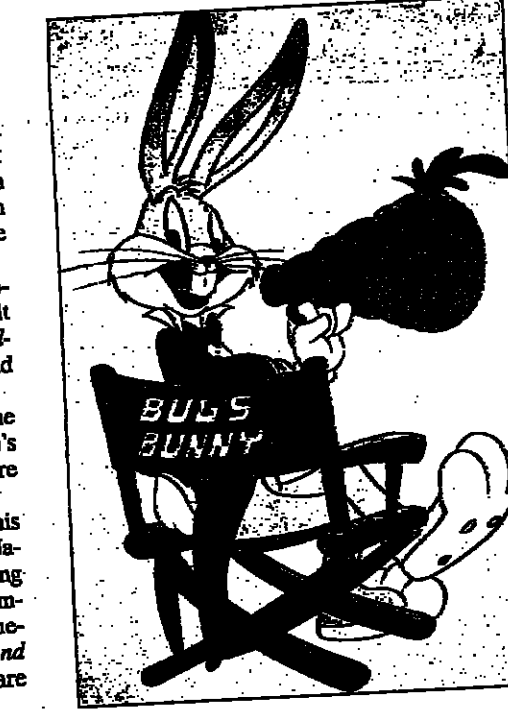
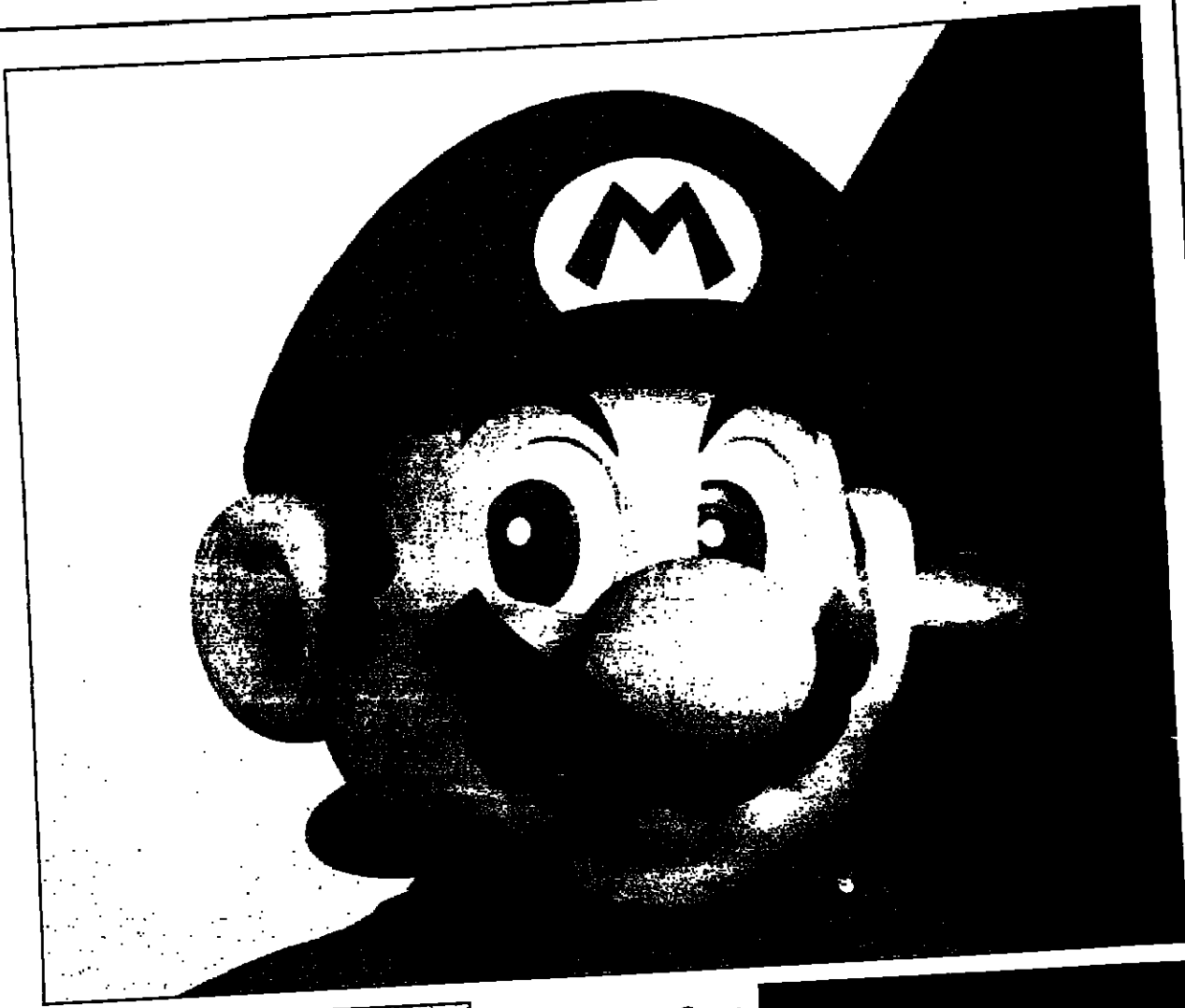
Such is the competition for young viewers that even acquired cartoons are increasing in price and threatening the future of some of the channels.

Adding to the threat to the traditional BBC and ITV after-school children's slot watched by generations of British children is the fact that children now prefer to watch programmes such as soap operas which are made for adults.

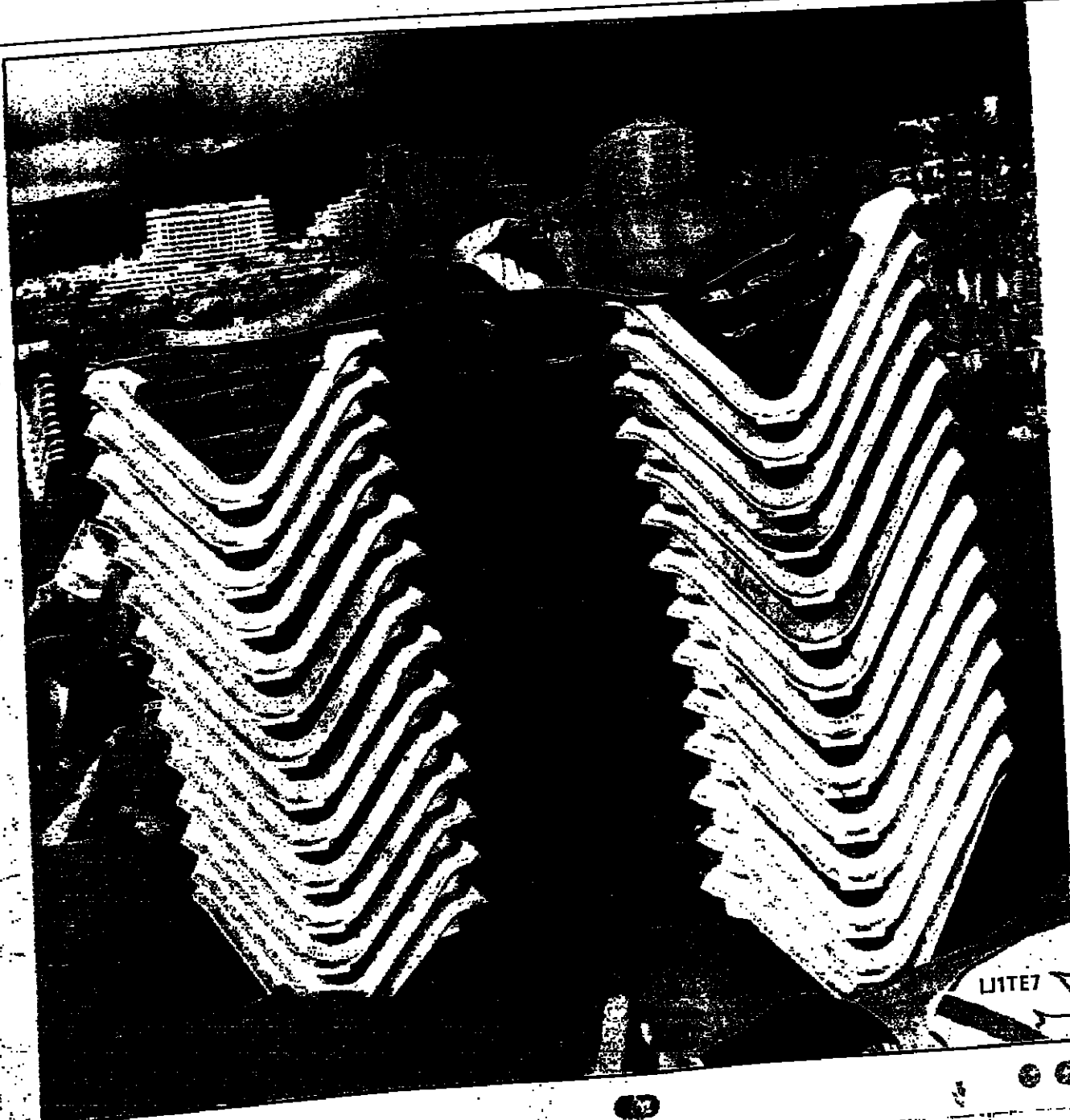
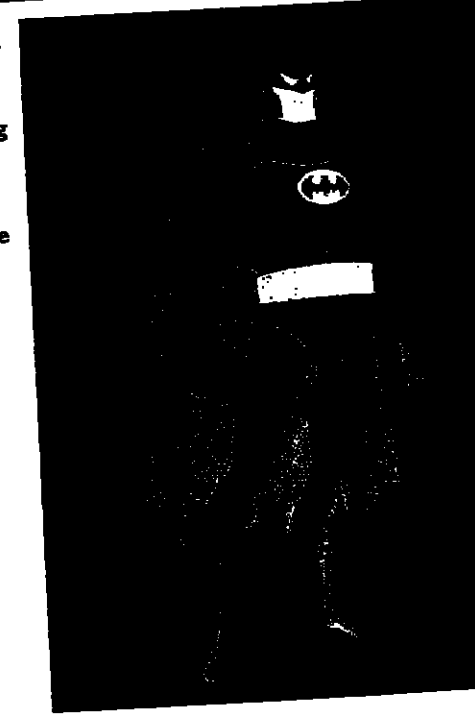
So far this year the top five rating programmes for children have all been adult programmes - the film *Adams Family Values*, *EastEnders*, *Neighbours*, *Casualty* and *Gladiators*.

Anna Home said: "A controller of the BBC or ITV could look at that children's block and think 'I could do so much more with a soap in there'."

The actor David Jason underlined his domination of popular television at the National Television Awards last night, winning Most Popular Actor, Most Popular Comedy Performer and Most Popular Comedy Programme for the *Only Fools and Horses* Christmas special. The awards are voted for by television viewers.



That's not all folks: Super Mario (above), Bugs Bunny (left) and Batman are part of the continuing wave of American cartoon programmes which critics say is destroying British culture



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4/TORY CONFERENCE

Immigrants' loyalties are questioned by Tebbit

Conservative officials launched a counter-offensive yesterday after Lord Tebbit attacked Britain's multicultural society. *Fran Abrams, Political Correspondent, examines a spate of outspoken comments by one of the party's most controversial right-wingers.*

The moderate, all-inclusive image which William Hague tried to convey yesterday came under fire almost immediately from the more extreme elements in his party. Lord Tebbit made a fringe speech claiming immigrants could not be loyal to "two nations", while the controversial MP Alan Clark suggested killing the entire IRA in one night.

Mr Hague moved swiftly last night to distance himself from remarks by Lord Tebbit, in which the former Tory party chairman suggested that the nation was being "splintered and fractured" by increasing multi-culturalism.

Echoing the famous "cricket test" controversy which occurred after he claimed people were only truly integrated if they supported England at cricket, Lord Tebbit claimed multi-culturalism was divisive.

"You can't have a whole load of different cultures in one society, you have one culture for one society and if you get different societies mixed up, living close cheek-by-jowl, you will splinter our society in the way that devolution is splintering the

United Kingdom," he said. "Multi-culturalism is a divisive force. One cannot uphold two sets of ethics or be loyal to two nations, any more than a man can have two masters. It perpetuates ethnic divisions because nationality is in the long term more about culture than ethnicity."

"Youngsters of all races born here should be taught that British history is their history, or they will forever be foreigners holding British passports and this kingdom will become a Yugoslavia," he said, underlining similar comments which he made in a weekend television interview.

He also blamed several of his most senior colleagues for the current state of the party. "Blame Margaret Thatcher, Michael Heseltine and John Major. She left old Labour too weak to resist new Labour. Michael Heseltine's vendetta against her tore the Tories apart, leaving a haemorrhage of membership pouring from the party's unhealed wounds. As John Major distanced himself from Thatcher, Tony Blair picked up and wore with style the Tory clothes which had fitted Major like an Oxford suit."

Earlier, Mr Hague had told the conference: "I want to see in our party more black people, more Asians, I want to see more young people." The principles which had brought him into the party included "patriotism without bigotry", he said.

Last night, Mr Hague's spokesman said Lord Tebbit's views did not chime with the leadership of his party. "We want a multicultural party. You can read that as a slap-down if you will," he said.



Old habits die hard: John Major is given a rapturous welcome by delegates yesterday

Photograph: Rui Xavier

Promise to scrap failed policies

Party leaders yesterday promised to scrap failed policies on local government. *Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent, reports on the Tories' policy U-turn.*

Sir Norman Fowler, the former party chairman, yesterday admitted that the lofty attitude of the Tory administration to local government had been wrong. He also hinted that the Tories could abandon their commitment to capping of council spending.

"Let us be frank," he told

the conference. "Too often in the past local government has been seen as the poor relation of Conservative politics."

Announcing a review of policy, he criticised the past government of which he was a member for failing to give Tory councillors the backing they deserved, and allowing ministers to visit local areas without telling Tory councillors.

"No more separation of national and local campaigning - we will win together or not at all," he said. As the shadow environment spokesman, Sir Norman committed the Tories to rebuilding the party with Tory council seats as its base.

A new policy group, including councillors, will examine

every aspect of Tory policy on the town halls. It will look again at whether or not the Tories should support capping of every local authority, he added. Capping was introduced by the Tories to force councils to toe the Treasury line on spending, and it would amount to a substantial U-turn.

The rethink has been forced on the Shadow Cabinet by the gains made on 1 May in local elections, in spite of the landslide for Labour in the general election. That helped the Tories to regain control of some county councils including Surrey and Hampshire.

Sir Norman said the Tories will oppose the setting up of regional assemblies by the Gov-

ernment, which amounted to the creation of the 'most powerful quangos this country has ever seen'.

Stephen Dorrell, education spokesman, said the Tories would oppose the introduction of student fees.

"It is introducing fees but has refused to give the assurance that it [the money] will go back into higher education."

There were also attacks on Labour for the private member's bill on banning foxhunting during a debate on the countryside.

A number of Tory women were cheered at the rostrum when they said they had been at the pro-hunting rally in Hyde Park.

Tory MPs accused of sexist remarks

Evidence of sexist comments by Conservative MPs in the House of Commons is to be presented to the Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, by Labour's chief whip.

The party's officials revealed last night that they were trawling videotapes of parliamentary proceedings, to corroborate complaints made by women MPs. Labour whips and some of the party's 102 women members have decided to act after being told to "get back in the kitchen" during debates.

A party spokesman said other comments included: "Why aren't you at home cooking your husband's dinner?" and calls of "She's got PMT" whenever a female MP stood up to complain about anything.

The party said it was not releasing names yet, partly because it would be discourteous to the Speaker to give them to the press before giving them to her, and partly because it might lead to legal action if the evidence was not completely clear.

SEEN & HEARD

William Hague said Radio 4's *Today* programme had tipped a horse called Opposition Leader to win in the 3.30 at Warwick yesterday. "In years to come they will be tipping opposition leader to win in many more races than they would care to admit," he said. The horse came in second.

In addition to the 180,000 papers returned in William Hague's ballot, Central Office also received a number of electricity and gas bills, £5,000 in cash and cheques - and a lottery ticket.

"Lost: An election. Can anyone help? If so, call 0171 637 1462." Poster in conference hall, which turned out to be a spoof advert for a cable TV comedy channel.

On today's agenda:

- Michael Howard, shadow Foreign Secretary
- John Redwood, shadow spokesman on trade and industry
- Sir Archie Hamilton, MP, chairman of the backbench 1922 Committee
- Lord Parkinson, the Tories' new chairman

And on the fringe:

- The European Foundation: Novelist Frederick Forsyth argues case against EU
- UK space policy: Conservative consumer affairs spokeswoman Cheryl Gillan takes her party into orbit
- Conservative Christian Fellowship: shadow Chancellor Peter Lilley takes a spiritual approach

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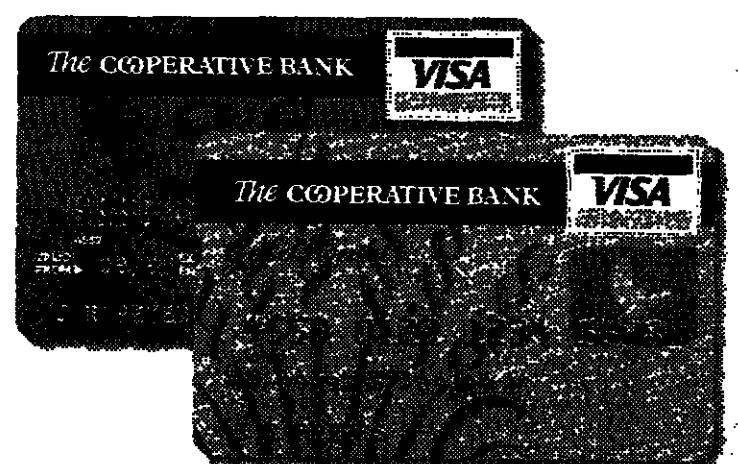
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THE INDEPENDENT
WEDNESDAY
8 OCTOBER 1997

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United and reformed we can win, Hague tells faithful

William Hague yesterday demanded unity and reform from his party after he had won the ballot endorsing his leadership. Anthony Bevis, Political Editor, at the Blackpool conference, heard him call on his party to 'stand tall' again.

A four-to-one vote for Mr Hague's leadership and his outline proposals for party reform emerged from a ballot of Conservative members. But with 399,203 ballot papers issued and only 143,399 giving Mr Hague their support, up to 64 per cent either did not vote, voted no (34,092), or spoiled their ballot (2,622). Nevertheless, Mr Hague told the conference yesterday:

"This is the week when we draw a line on the sand. The week when we stop apologising. The week when we get up off our knees and stand tall again. This is the week when the whole world will see we are back in business."

He urged rank-and-file representatives not to be afraid. "Have faith in our party's abiding values," he urged. "We have a mountain to climb, a

hard battle to win. But together, united and reformed, we can and we will prevail."

The underlying demand for unity had earlier brought strong applause for John Major, when he had provided an introduction for the new leader. Striking a chord with the loyalist conference, the former prime minister provoked a cry of protest from the hall when he said that perhaps he was to

blame for the election defeat. But there was strong applause when he added: "Perhaps divided views... in the parliamentary party made our position untenable."

Mr Major said the party faced a simple choice: "Reform the party, back William Hague, rediscover the art of working together, fight every seat for every vote - or fight one another and lose elections."

Party seeks to become top voluntary movement

The Conservatives want to become 'the most effective volunteer political movement in western Europe'. Anthony Bevis dissects their 'Blueprint for Change'.

A paper published yesterday will form the basis of a reform package for a special party conference next spring - introducing a new and unified party constitution.

The **Urgency of Change**. The case for change is put in the context of the history of the 20th century, during which the Conservatives will have been in government, either alone or in coalition, for nearly 70 years. "No wonder," the paper says, "that political historians have already labelled our century the Conservative century."

However, it then adds: "On 1 May, the Conservative Party suffered its heaviest defeat in a general election since 1906." With only 165 MPs, no representation of Scotland, Wales or many of the country's great cities and towns, the number of councillors more than halved since the mid-80s, and a membership down from an estimated million-plus in 1979 to under 400,000 today, the leadership believes that the opportunity has to be taken for root-and-branch change.

"This decline is structural, not cyclical. It is not just a result of temporary political unpopularity, and there is no evidence of a sustained revival of membership... even during years of... political success."

Our Organisational Mission. "Our mission is to create the greatest volunteer party in the western democratic world,

a party more than double our current size that can provide a sustainable advantage for Conservatives at all levels of British electoral contest." But that will involve "trade-offs". The paper says: "We want a party which is more involving, listening and participative. But we also want a party which is cohesive, fast-moving and able to engage in mature debate without appearing perpetually disunited."

A Single Party - a Single Constitution. "Central to the reform programme will be the formation of a single party structure embodied in a single constitution" - bringing together the "loose structures and cumbersome committees" of the existing voluntary, professional and representative wings of the party. A single governing body is proposed, with some elected members, but "sensitive" issues would be managed by sub-committees, which would control the rules for leadership elections, candidate selection, the conference, and membership.

A Streamlined Volunteer Organisation. Constituency association chairmen would meet twice a year as a National Convention, and the six members of its executive would have places on the party board. One executive place might be reserved for a woman.

New Channels for Involvement. A revitalised Conservative Political Centre would offer members a role in policy-making. There would be a new youth organisation, called Conservative Future, and a Women's Network, to "encourage talented women".

Revival in Local Government. A Conservative councillors' association is proposed, with a convention of Tory council leaders meeting every year, and a senior councillor to be

elected to the party board. **Improved Professional Support.** "The professional support network needs to become more flexible, more effectively managed from the centre and capable of being deployed in areas of greatest need." That means "that in place of the traditional one-constituency, one-office set-up there should be a variable 'mosaic' of offices and support".

Creating a Mass Membership. "Ultimately we believe that our objective should be to have one million members, a total comparable to that which existed twenty-five years ago." That millennium target will require a sense of involvement - but also a membership database, an improvement in communication with members, and a professionally marketed recruitment drive - based on higher subscriptions.

Encouraging Talented Candidates. Candidate selection, the paper says, is "best judged locally" by constituency associations - but women candidates need encouragement, and they might need to be given a quarter of the places on first-round selection lists; constituencies might have candidate shortlists imposed; and there could be a national shortlist for by-election candidates.

Harnessing Modern Technology. Information technology will be part of the "glue that will bind the single party together", enabling membership data to be used for mail-shots. The Internet might also be used "as a communications tool".

Maintaining Standards of Integrity. Swift, effective and fair action is promised "to deal with future cases where the reputation of our party may be threatened". An Ethics and Integrity Committee is proposed to investigate complaints.



Upwardly mobile: "We have a mountain to climb, but together, we can and we will prevail!"

Photograph: Tom Pilton

SKETCH BY DAVID AARONOVITCH

Midget Entertainers put on their show

William was adamant: the Tony Blairites had had a big conference and now the Outlaws - their deadly rivals - must have one too. "Anyway, their's was a jolly rotten conference," he said bitterly. "And we can hold a much better one, with more clapping 'n' more refreshments."

His colleagues regarded William with admiration, but admiration tinged with alarm. The Blairites' event, held in magnificent surroundings of the church hall, had been generally regarded as a success. The local newspaper had reported, and even the vicar had put in a brief appearance. As ever, it was Howard who braved his leader's scorn with practical objections. "But what are we going to do for a party?" he objected. "You've got to have a party, otherwise you just make speeches to yourselves, and no one listens, and no one reports it."

As it happened the Outlaws were just now passing a large brick building with neglected, overgrown lawns. Above the door, on a rain-damaged painted sign, was the legend, "Dunrobin Home for Retired Gentlefolk". From under this sign an old man with thick glasses rushed up to the Outlaws. "Ah! Here you are at last!" he puffed. "I thought you'd never come. They're all waiting for you inside!" William did not hesitate. He sensed that here was the audience that he had been seeking.

Inside, William and the Outlaws found themselves standing on a low platform. In



front of them were row after row of the oldest, most wrinkled people that they had ever seen, an army in bath-chairs. The short-sighted man introduced the Outlaws as the Botley Troupe of Midget Entertainers.

William cleared his throat. "Actually," he announced, "we're not here to do tricks. We're here to have a conference." He paused and, to his amazement, was applauded. Emboldened, he went on. "So, we're going to have speeches and votes." The sound of clapping filled the hall. A delighted William continued.

"Now, if any of you would like to say anything first, then just indicate."

At the back of the hall a thin hand was raised, shakily. William invited its owner - a tall, wistful-looking old man with glasses - to come down to the front. Introducing himself as "the Major", and speaking in lugubrious tones, the old man spoke about his recent "bereavement", the importance of knowing who your true friends are, and the other afflictions of advanced age. Then he shuffled sadly off.

It was time, William thought, for him to listen things up. He drew himself up to his full height. "Boo!" he said loudly. There was a scattering of applause, a muffled groan and several old ladies toppled from their chairs and lay, unmoving, on the floor. "They're not dead," said William sternly. "they're just sleepin'." "No, William," said Howard, who had gone to investigate, "Ac-

FROM THE FLOOR: GAVIN WILLIAMSON

All blue rinse and pinstripes

This is my third year at conference and nothing has changed. The representatives can still be neatly divided into two groups.

The first are the blue rinse brigade who form the backbone of the party. The second are the young, aspiring prime ministers - all of them male - who strut about in their pinstripes and highly-polished shoes. The first group are dying out and the second are always going to be a small minority.

It is my dream that the Conservative activist of tomorrow will not turn up here with his collection of five suits plus dinner jacket. What is wrong with the T-shirts and jeans he wears every day at university?

William Hague said yesterday that he wanted to see more young people in the Conservatives. I would ask him to make our party the best party to be at.

We need to get away from the desperate networking which takes place here every year. Everyone under 30 is clamouring to be the next candidate for Kensington and Chelsea - which is hardly inspiring to a young person arriving at conference for the first time. We need to see people talking excitedly about ideas and the reform of both party and country, not about how to advance their own careers.

The problem is that the Tory party is not putting its resources into young people. Until three years ago the chairman of Conservative Students

was a paid sabbatical post with money to spend on recruiting young members.

Now the only person at Central Office who can deal with students' concerns does evening shifts in a bar for the privilege of working unpaid for the party during the day.

In his Green Paper yesterday Mr Hague suggested merging the party's three youth organisations - Conservative Students, Young Conservatives and Conservative Graduates - into one group called Conservative Future. We all accept the need to reform, but fiddling with the structures does not bring in new members. Investment does.

Gavin Williamson is chairman of Conservative Students.

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Of the 306, '...it delivers driving pleasure in huge doses... excellent in all respects...'

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Age of consent is certain to fall

The age of consent for homosexuals will almost certainly be reduced from 18 to 16 within two years. Patricia Wynn Davies, Legal Affairs Editor, looks at the historic agreement reached between the Government and the gay rights group Stonewall.

It is not a question of encouraging people to have sex but encouraging people to make informed decisions, said Euan Sutherland, one of the appli-

cants in yesterday's test case ruling by the European Commission of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Following the commission's decision that differing ages of consent for heterosexuals and homosexuals could not be justified, the Government has agreed with Stonewall not to contest further the challenges brought by Mr Sutherland and Chris Morris, and to allow Parliament a free vote on equalisation.

Mr Sutherland, 20, from Dulwich, south London, who works in publishing, said: "The law should treat everyone equally and it angers me that

young gay men can still be treated as criminals." Mr Sutherland and Mr Morris, 18, from Ealing, west London, claimed the unequal age of consent violated the right to privacy guaranteed in article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights.

Angela Mason, director of Stonewall, said: "This is an historic step forward. A free vote in Parliament will be an opportunity to break with the centuries of discrimination and bigotry and begin the process of accepting gay men and lesbians as equal citizens in society."

The influx of new Labour

MPs at the last election is expected to ensure that the move to equalise the ages secures support in the House of Commons, giving gays the same right as heterosexuals since 1885. Many will support the change because of concerns that the risk of criminality hinders effective health education for gay men under 18.

The campaigning group Outrage! condemned the possible delay of two years before the reform passes into legislation. The issue is expected to be voted on as an amendment to the forthcoming Crime and Disorder Bill, but this would have to be followed up with spe-

cific legislation. Peter Titchell, director of Outrage!, added: "We urge the Home Secretary to announce an immediate moratorium on prosecutions relating to consensual gay sex involving young men of 16 and 17." When MPs last voted on the issue three years ago they reduced the age of consent from 21 to 18 but a move to cut it to 16 was defeated by 27 votes.

The agreement between the Government and Stonewall is the first instance of a UK administration making such a public commitment to settling a Strasbourg complaint. Without the deal Mr Sutherland's

and Mr Morris's claims would have progressed to the European Court of Human Rights. Stephen Grosz, their solicitor, said: "The human rights commission has decisively rejected the last Government's attempt to justify discrimination against homosexuals, and we would expect the court to do the same."

Mr Sutherland's father, Norman, a 53-year-old educational administrator, supported his son's Strasbourg complaint. He told a Stonewall news conference yesterday that his son had come out when he was 16 and showed "great maturity" in the way he had handled the issue of his sexuality.

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Village life: Guide Stephen Crane pointing out landmarks to his first sightseeing group on the gay Soho tour yesterday

Photograph: David Rose

This way for the sex and seediness of Soho village

Organised walking tours of lesbian and gay Soho began yesterday, designed to celebrate the homosexual heritage of what has become London's gay village. Clare Garner visited the hunting grounds of Oscar Wilde and Charles Laughton.

A band of sightseers, with more than a handful of dog collars between them, gathered together yesterday to be guided solemnly through celebrated cottaging country and the 17th-century world of Molested Molliens.

Stephen Crane, a virgin at St Martin-in-the-Fields, strode ahead, dodging traffic and weaving a path through the labyrinth of Soho in central London. His two-hour historical tour of gay hot spots - organised by Kairos, a "spiritual project" for lesbian and gay communities - begins at his church and winds up in Old Compton Street, now centre of the "village" gay life. He pieced it together after scouring records in the British Library.

Left into Wardour Street, right at Ann Summers and into Old Compton Street. "A lot of 18th-century Soho is still here," said Mr Crane, remarking on some ornate shutters. But a lot is not. One is struck by how the cruising landscape of Oscar Wilde, Cole Porter and Noel Coward must have been wonderfully devoid of themed pubs.

"Over the road," he said, pointing his umbrella in the direction of a branch of a French-style cafe chain, "is where 21s coffee bar used to be. That's where Cliff Richard and the Shadows used to work and where he was discovered."

Into Dean Street, where the serial killer Dennis Nielson picked up rent boys in the Golden Lion pub, and the newly wed actress Elsa Lanchester, living at

No 28, famously told her husband, Charles Laughton, that he should get rid of the couch on which he had confessed to "entertaining" young men.

At Charing Cross Road, Mr Crane conjured up an image of Molly Trials on the street in the 1600s. "Most Molliens [an old word for homosexuals] were pilloried at Charing Cross - and it wasn't just vegetables that were thrown at them. It was dead cats, dead dogs, iron and broken glass. Often people died."

On to Soho Square, where William Beckford lived in the 1820s and wrote *Vathek*, a tract of sin, sorcery, seduction and sex. "He was the richest man in England and also openly gay, which was astounding for that time," Mr Crane said. Beckford spent his time in the Seven Dials, a place he called "the Holy Land" where he could "kiss the relics". "It's always been a seedy area," added Mr Crane.

References to lesbian haunts are rare, but a cafe called The Box, apparently holds a regular women's night. It was, in an earlier incarnation, called As You Like It, and a second home to Quentin Crisp.

At the launch earlier, Neil Whitehead, general secretary of Kairos, explained that the aim of the tours is to raise money. Participants are invited to give £5 towards a Kairos spiritual community centre.

Soho Square yielded another hot spot: No 3, which now houses the British Board of Film Classification, was once the home of Richard Payne Knight, author of a book on phallic worship: *The Worship of Priapus*.

The tour takes in St Martin's Court, where Pocket books had a gay section before 1967 and Oscar Wilde lived, and St Martin's Lane, where a scene from *Victim*, a film about the blackmailing of homosexuals starring Dirk Bogarde, was shot. Kettner's restaurant also features. Once the haunt of Wilde and Bosie, it is "more of a pizza place now, I'm afraid".

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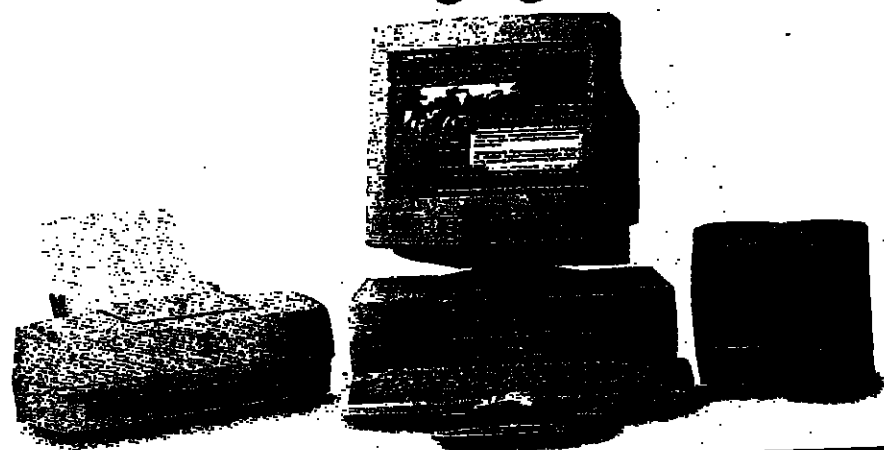
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Italy facing new elections as far-left rejects budget plans

The Italian government was on the verge of collapse last night as the far-left party Rifondazione Comunista gave its final thumbs-down to the 1998 budget.

That would deprive Romano Prodi, the Prime Minister, of the votes he needs to get Italy into shape for the single European currency.

But all is not yet lost, says Andrew Gumbel.

It was an unusually impassioned Romano Prodi who took the podium in the Chamber of Deputies yesterday afternoon and gave the most important speech of his 17 months in office. Reforming the welfare state, he said, was "the last and indispensable step on our march towards Europe". He appealed to all sides, not just Rifondazione Comunista, to safeguard the country's future.

His half-hour speech made little impression on Fausto Bertinotti, Rifondazione's in-

transigent leader. "What the government is proposing is totally inadequate," Mr Bertinotti announced. "This budget is unacceptable in its present form and we will vote against it."

That seemed to be Rifondazione's last word on the matter, and Mr Prodi's centre-left coalition thereby lost its parliamentary majority.

The next few moves have been sufficiently well mapped out in advance to be near-certain predictions: Mr Prodi will offer his resignation and, with the political mood set against forging a new, broader coalition, the country can look forward to its third general election in less than five years.

But that still leaves the budget. President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro has made clear that he will not dissolve parliament until the package has been passed, a position that will almost certainly drag out the crisis for another month at least.

Mr Prodi can expect to be reinstated as a caretaker premier, charged with the task of finding the extra votes he needs to push the package through and guarantee Italy's place in European monetary union.

That, in turn, will produce some unseemly haggling with the present opposition - a kind

of pre-election campaign fought over the fine print of the public finances - but will probably result in the legislation that Mr Prodi has been looking for all along. The election would be postponed until February or so.

What interest does Rifondazione have in sabotaging the Prodi government if the thing it opposes - cuts in pensions and welfare spending - will probably go through anyway?

There are two reasons. First, opinion polls suggest that a new election would give Rifondazione more votes and the main government and opposition parties a few less. And secondly, a new election would destroy current attempts by the major parties to reform the constitution and make the country more governable.

"More governable" means, first and foremost, reducing the influence of small parties like Rifondazione that for too long have held Italy to ransom. Instability may be bad for the country, but it suits Mr Bertinotti just fine.

● Austria, Italy and Greece will all become part of the Schengen agreement that opens European Union borders this year, although full membership must wait until next year.



The Queen starting her Pakistan tour yesterday Photograph: Reuters

The Queen goes shoeless in Pakistan

The Queen began her trip to Pakistan yesterday. Accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh, she visited the grand Faisal Mosque and, in keeping with Islamic traditions, she draped a scarf over her head and took off her shoes before entering the white marble building.

Calling the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, "tragic", she paid tribute to her fund-raising efforts. Diana twice travelled to Pakistan to help raise money for a cancer hospital, founded by the country's former cricket captain Imran Khan. The Shahnum Khanum Cancer Hospital, a memorial to Khan's mother who died of cancer, offers free treatment to thousands of the poor.

The royal visit marks the 50th anniversary of Pakistan's independence from Britain. The Queen will stay in the country for six days - visiting Karachi and the resort area of Murray, where the British elite went to escape the sweltering summers during British rule - before heading to India.

Today, she will meet President Nawaz Sharif and former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, an event which has created considerable controversy as relations between the two adversaries are at an all-time low.

Israel feels effects of Hamas affair

Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, spiritual leader of the Islamic organisation Hamas, yesterday offered Israel a truce in return for an end to Jewish settlements, demolition of Palestinian houses and an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. But he ruled out permanent reconciliation. Patrick Cockburn reports.

Israel is still absorbing the consequences of the attempted assassination of a leader of Hamas in Amman which led to the freeing of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. Since his return to Gaza he has shown that he is politically versatile and, whatever his state of health, capable of giving frequent interviews.

Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, has counter-attacked his critics, saying the débacle in Amman was simply an operation against terrorism which went wrong. He has appointed a commission of inquiry, but it has few powers. Mr Netanyahu may be damaged in the eyes of the Is-

raeli public by the realisation that Hamas is now a serious political force, thanks primarily to the actions of Israel.

He may also have damaged his credibility in Washington by refusing to tell Jordan the name of the poison injected into Khalid Meshal, the Hamas leader, by Mossad, the Israeli foreign intelligence organisation. Instead, he sent an antidote which Jordan refused to accept because it thought it might be more poison. The issue was only settled by President Bill Clinton.

Overshadowed by the so-called Meshal affair, talks have begun between Israel and the Palestinians over restarting negotiations suspended since Israel started to build a settlement at Har Homa in March. Dennis Ross, the United States peace envoy, struck an optimistic note saying: "We heard a very strong sense of mutual commitment on the part of both sides to try to move ahead."

● Iraq is still refusing to disclose fully key details of its biological weapons program and is imposing new restrictions on United Nations inspectors, the UN said. It is now up to the US and Britain to decide whether to ask for new sanctions, a move which could be opposed by China and others.

Saudi clue to Algerian truce

The Algerian President Liamine Zeroual yesterday began a visit to Saudi Arabia that could see renewed efforts to achieve a ceasefire in his country's brutal five-year civil war, which by some estimates has now taken 120,000 lives.

Officially, the military-backed regime rejects all offers of help, be they from Arab or European states, as unacceptable interference in Algeria's affairs. But as the slaughter continues on a daily basis, pressure is mounting for a peace initiative, from whatever source.

The latest atrocity, according to the tightly controlled Algerian press, came on Sunday night when "terrorists" - the standard description for Islamic guerrillas - reportedly slashed the throats of 16 civilians as they slept in the village of Sekmouna, 45 miles south of the capital Algiers.

Hours later a legendary leader of the independence struggle against the French, Hocine Ait Ahmed, said the world should not be lulled into silence by the "fascist-like" threats of the Zeroual regime.

He claimed that 120,000 civilians had died since the Government cancelled 1992 elections that the fundamentalists seemed certain to win. The figure is double the previously estimated toll of 60,000.

Ait Ahmed, founder of the secular opposition Socialist Forces Front and a resident of Switzerland, said in a speech in London that the "silence and indifference of Western powers" had helped set Algeria on course "for all-out slaughter likely to assume rapidly the dimensions of genocide".

Danes to hold referendum

Denmark will hold a referendum on the European Union's Amsterdam Treaty on 28 May next year - after a decision on which nations will be in the first wave of Europe's economic and monetary union.

Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen announced the referendum at the opening of parliament's autumn session and urged Euro-sceptic Danes to accept the revisions to the Maastricht Treaty contained in the Amsterdam package.

Danish voters remain deeply suspicious. A poll in September showed 44 per cent in favour against 34 per cent immediately after the Amsterdam summit.

Short's £20m Uganda aid

Clare Short said yesterday that Britain would provide £20m to help the Ugandan government introduce free and universal primary education. Ms Short, the Secretary of State for International Development, is making a visit to Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda, her first official visit to Africa.

HK ambassador named

Britain's new consul-general in Hong Kong will be Sir Andrew Burns. Mr Burns, now Deputy Under-Secretary for Trade and Investment, will take up the post in late November. He will replace Francis Cornish, who will take up a new diplomatic service appointment.

Cook to visit Middle East

The Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, hopes to visit Israel, the Palestinian territories and at least two other countries in the Middle East next month. He was due to visit the region this month, before Britain takes over the European Union presidency next year, but had to postpone for scheduling reasons.

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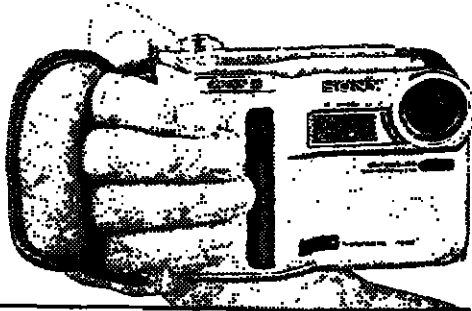
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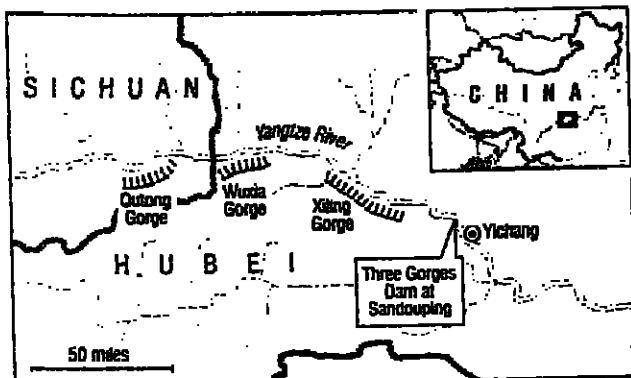
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It's what you want to know

Bulldozer triumphs as time runs out for the mighty Yangtze

China has taken the first steps towards diverting the course of the mighty Yangtze. Next month, the controversial Three Gorges Dam will reach the point of no return. Teresa Poole looks at a project criticised as an environmental disaster in the making.



It was nearly 80 years ago that the father of the Chinese republic, Sun Yat-sen, first proposed a dam across the Yangtze. But for the boatmen who work the river near the massive dam site in central Hubei province, this week marked the turning point.

Travelling by boat downstream towards the dam project, the majestic river starts to make a sweeping leftwards bend as one approaches China's biggest construction project since the Great Wall. Work started three years ago and since then the Yangtze boatmen have watched an army of peasants digging a canal to the right-hand side, part of the biggest earth-moving exercise in history. At the same time, a wall of concrete — the preliminary "coffer dam" — has slowly been inching its way across the river, slicing into the main stream and gradually re-routing this stately river into its new channel.

Two days ago, the boatmen were told that they could no longer travel along the route Mother Nature intended, and must instead swing out through the four-kilometre canal. Over

the next four weeks, the gap in the coffer dam will slowly be closed across the original river, culminating in a ceremony early next month in which the final blocks will be put in place under the watchful eye of the dam's most powerful backer, the prime minister, Li Peng. Thus will the Yangtze be diverted by the might of the bulldozer.

With the natural riverbed then dry below the coffer dam, work will begin on building the real dam wall, a 175-metre curtain of concrete which will sweep between the hills on either side of the river. When the whole project is completed in 2009, the dam will have created a 663-km long snake-like reservoir which will flood an area twice the size of the Isle of Wight. The upstream river level will have risen 100 metres, and the famous Three Gorges scenery will be underwater.

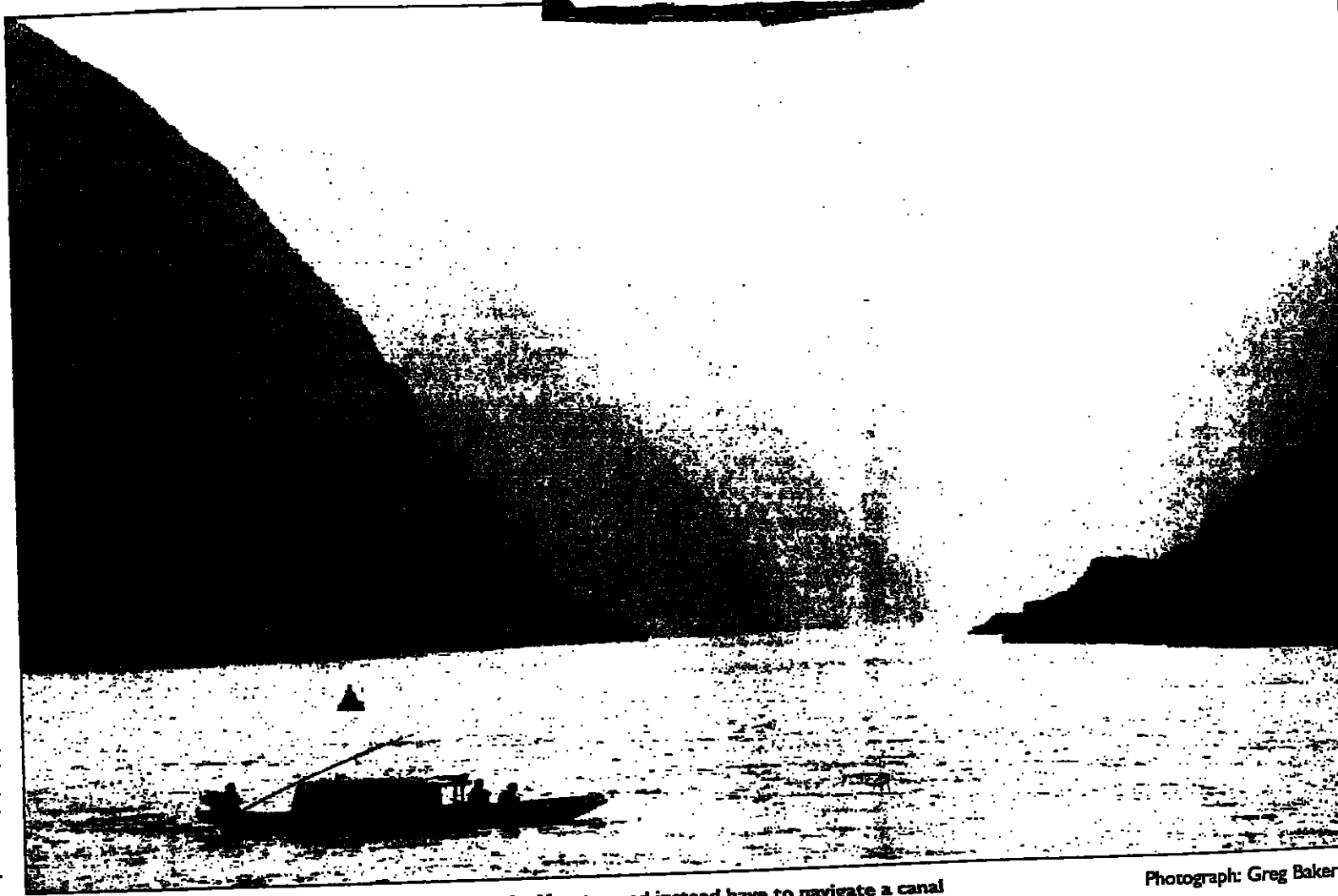
For both opponents and champions of the project, the scale of the endeavour is breathtaking. By completion, some 103 million cubic metres of soil and rock will have been excavated. Most controversially, around 1.2 million people,

1,600 enterprises, several cities, 140 towns and 4,500 villages will have been relocated.

The Chinese government is putting its money where its mouth is: by the end of the year it will have spent 27 billion yuan (£2bn), but this is nothing compared with the projected total cost of 203 billion yuan.

The questions which surround the project are as massive as its demand for cement. The human rights implications of the forced relocation is one major aspect of the project on which China has not encouraged foreign scrutiny. But there are less emotive issues that are just as worrying: the silt that will build up behind the dam, the threat to fish and fauna, and the submersion of archaeological relics.

For the Yangtze boatmen, the project is already a nuisance. If the river flow is too strong their boats will not be able safely to pass through the canal and will have to use a temporary ship-lock which will not be ready until next May. And during high flood season, navigation will be prohibited completely.



Rough passage: Boatmen can no longer travel down the Yangtze and instead have to navigate a canal

Photograph: Greg Baker/AP

The builders who were dammed

"I came, I saw and I was conquered," said President Roosevelt when he inaugurated the Hoover Dam in 1935. Few Western leaders would be likely to repeat such gushing enthusiasm today. Worldwide, huge dams have become increasingly controversial.

One of the most famous dams of all time was the Aswan Dam in Egypt in the 1950s, where the West and the Soviet Union vied with each other to finance the expensive project, and thus gain political influence. The Russians won. At the time, the project was enormously popular. Crowds chanted: "After the dam, our land will be paradise." But the project brought few benefits, in the longer term.

Elsewhere, opposition to large dams has had dramatic consequences. Conservationists in Tasmania failed to prevent the government creating the Pedder dam in the 1960s. In 1983, however, crowds forced

a retreat on proposals to build a dam close to the junction of the Franklin and Gordon rivers, which would have flooded a wilderness area. More recently, there have been moves to restore the environmentally unique Lake Pedder, by draining the reservoir which the dam created.

In eastern Europe, the popular resistance to dams played a key early role in creating the mass movements which ended the Communist era. The Gab-

zikovo dam on the Danube was approved by the Communist authorities in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. But a huge environmentalist movement in Hungary — the biggest opposition since the uprising of 1956 — forced the government to back down, in 1988. The retreat marked the first sign that crowds could force even an authoritarian regime on to the defensive. Within a year, demonstrations in East Germany, Czechoslovakia and

elsewhere ended one-party rule throughout the region.

More recently, dams have remained highly controversial. The Pergau dam in Malaysia was heavily funded from the British aid budget, so that the taxpayer subsidised British contractors. An official condemnation by the National Audit Office forced the Government to back down, in 1993. The adventure does not seem likely to be repeated.

— Steve Crawshaw

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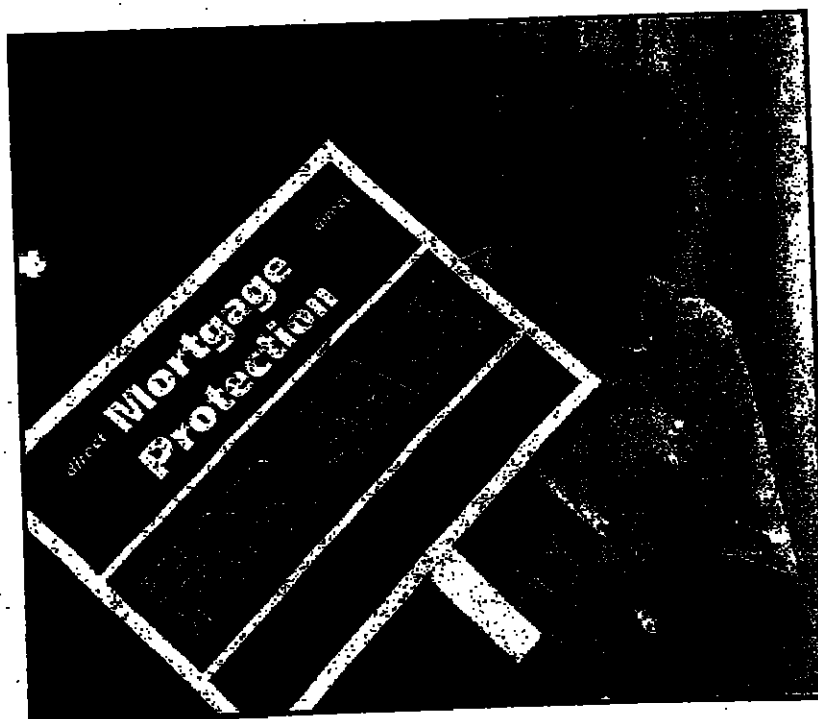
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Smith urged to publish ROH report

A government-ordered inquiry into the Royal Opera House's relationship with the Arts Council is critical of both institutions. But, as David Lister found, the Arts Council chose only to release a summary of the inquiry's findings.

The financial management and systems of the Royal Opera House need to be improved, according to an independent inquiry. The study, by City lawyer Edward Walker-Arnott, concluded that there were "difficulties and tension in the relationship" between the ROH and its funding body, and "both sides should take some criticism".

With criticisms generally muted, the inquiry report was welcomed yesterday by Lord Gowrie, the Arts Council chairman. But the Arts Council attracted immediate flak for publishing only a summary rather than the report in its entirety, leading to speculation that the full report may have contained further criticisms.

Questions are likely to be raised as to

whether there should have been an independent inquiry, rather than Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, allowing the Arts Council to commission a report from Mr Walker-Arnott, release only a summary, and show it to the Royal Opera House management before publishing it.

Raymond Gubbay, a classical music promoter who has worked with the Royal Opera House in the past, last night wrote to Mr Smith, urging him to publish the whole report. "How better to clear the air than to publish Mr Walker-Arnott's findings in full. Why should we be asked to make do with a bowdlerised version, no doubt sanitised to protect those involved? In the era of open government under new Labour, this is hardly setting a good example," Mr Gubbay wrote.

The summary uses such phrases as "Mr Walker-Arnott makes a number of detailed and technical criticisms ..." without explaining what they were. Sources said last night that some Arts Council members remain distinctly unhappy, and are understood to be threatening to withhold the next

tranche of Royal Opera House lottery money (some £8m of its £78m) if they are not more satisfied with the way the ROH is managing the redevelopment project and the Arts Council's monitoring of it.

Mr Smith ordered the inquiry following the resignation of Genista McIntosh as chief executive of the ROH and her replacement by the Arts Council secretary-general Mary Allen, without the post being advertised. The ROH receives £78m of lottery money from the Arts Council.

In his report, Mr Walker-Arnott looks into the state of the Royal Opera House lottery funded development, the management systems, structure and procedures to be operated by the ROH during its closure period, and the ROH's relationship with its funding body the Arts Council, including systems of accountability. He concludes: "There is a need for clarity in setting out what is expected in the relationships between the Arts Council and the organisations it funds; rigour in assessing and monitoring these organisations; and the ability and willingness to apply sanctions to those organisations where necessary."



David Mellor after his meeting yesterday. Photograph: Kieran Doherty/Reuters

Italian ambassador assures Mellor over treatment of football fans

The former minister David Mellor yesterday said he had won assurances from Italian authorities about how English fans will be treated at this weekend's crucial World Cup qualifying match in Rome.

Mr Mellor, the head of the Government's new football task force, had voiced fears that travelling supporters would be treated like "animals" by Italian police, facing three separate searches and having many possessions - including coins - confiscated.

However, after a 45-minute meeting yesterday with the Italian ambassador Paolo Galli, Mr Mellor said he had been informed that the English contingent would receive a "warm welcome" in Rome. The former Conservative Arts minister, who was accompanied by representatives of supporters' groups, said he had also been told that English fans would be treated the same as Italians.

He said: "The Chief of Police in Rome

has assured the ambassador that the civil rights of visiting supporters will be respected, and oppressive policing will not be a feature."

Mr Mellor added: "[The Italian ambassador] assured me nothing will be done to the English fans that will not also be done to Italian fans."

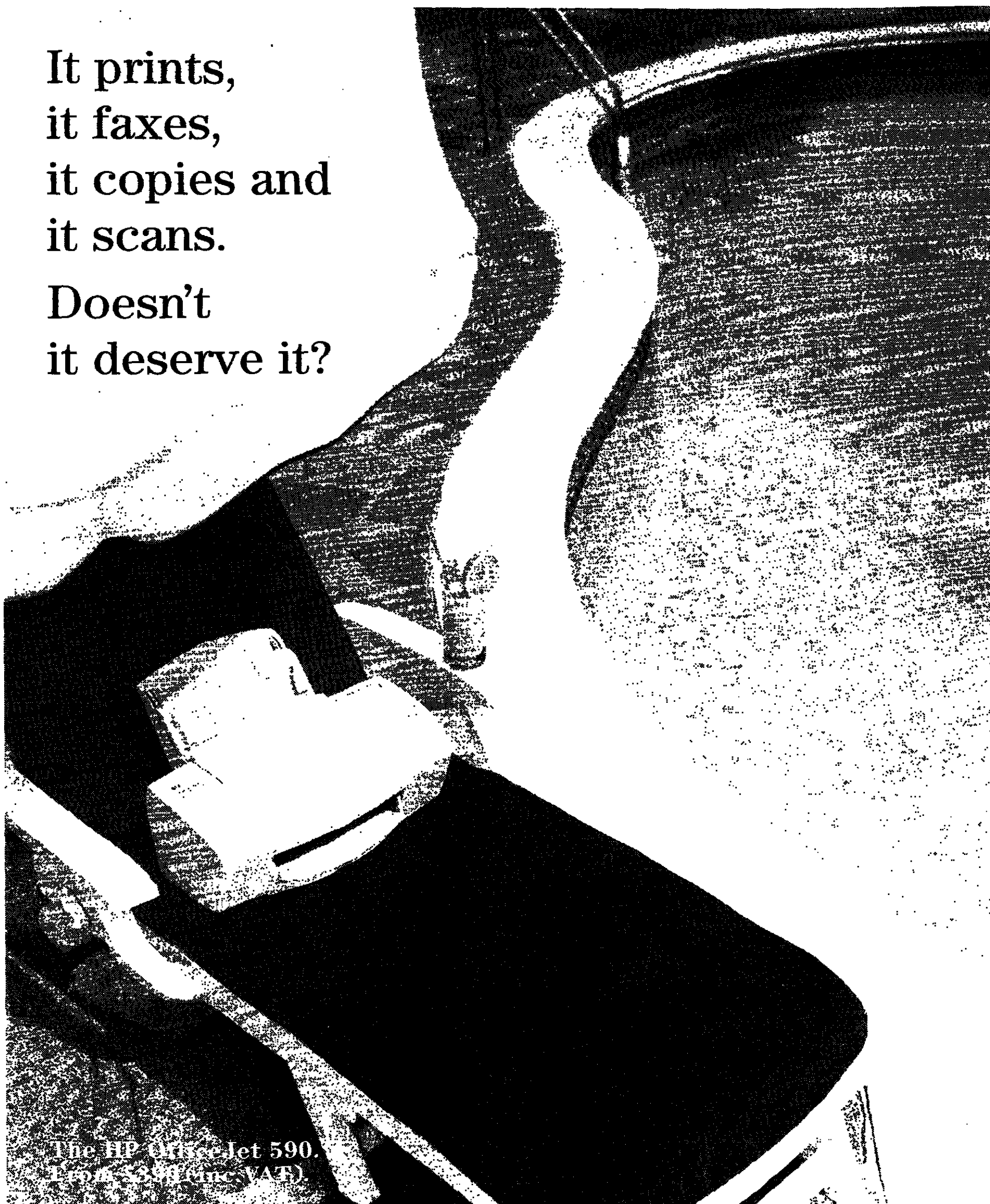
However, following the news that British police have already identified 670 known trouble makers among those going to Italy, Mr Mellor and rest of the delegation recognised the need to tackle a small minority of "scum" who follow England.

"Some people will behave badly, but the art of policing is to differentiate between people who behave badly and those who do not," he said.

Ten thousand fans are expected to travel to the match, including up to 1,000 without tickets.

- Michael Streeter

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TV bosses cut bias claim

Threat of legal action by the BBC over an allegation of political bias by a senior executive forced the independent company Scottish Television to carry out cuts to a fly-on-the-wall documentary on Gordon Brown screened last night.

The BBC faxed a letter threatening a writ over remarks made in the programme by Charlie Whelan, the Chancellor's media spokesman, about Kevin Marsh, the editor of *World At One*.

Mr Whelan's words were printed in newspaper accounts of the programme, and on Monday afternoon the BBC's legal department faxed their warning to STV. After consulting their own lawyers the company decided to cut the words in question from the programme, *We Are The Treasury*, which went out on ITV. Mr Marsh has been with the BBC for nine years, and is not a member of a political party. Senior BBC officials rejected that he was in any way partisan.

- Kim Sengupta

DAILY POEM

The First Day

by Christina Rossetti

*I wish I could remember the first day,
First hour, first moment of your meeting me,
If bright or dim the season, it might be
Summer or Winter for aught I can say.
So unrecorded did it slip away,
So blind was I to see and foresee,
So dull to mark the budding of my tree
That would not blossom yet for many a May.
If only I could recollect it, such
A day of days! I let it come and go
As traceless as a thaw of bygone snow;
It seemed to mean so little, meant so much;
If only now I could recall that touch,
First touch of hand in hand - Did one but know!*

Our Daily Poems today and tomorrow come from *The Nation's Favourite Love Poems* (edited by Daisy Goodwin; BBC Books, £4.99), which coincides with a poll conducted by *The Bookworm* to find Britain's best-loved romantic verse. The winning poems will be read in a special programme on BBC1 at 10.30pm tomorrow, National Poetry Day.



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Artificial skin heralds a new era of surgery

Body parts could be bought from the laboratories of the 21st century. Scientists have already grown human skin, bone and liver outside the body and heart muscle is next. Jeremy Laurence, Health Editor, looks towards a new medical frontier.

The world's first human skin grown entirely in the laboratory could herald a new era in transplant surgery, a scientist claimed yesterday.

Instead of relying on organs taken from other bodies doctors may soon be able to harvest specially grown replacements.

The aim is to overcome the shortage of donor organs and provide human tissue grown for specific purposes.

The first example, human skin called Dermagraft, is grown on a biodegradable mesh that dissolves once the transplant is complete and is specially designed for the treatment of foot ulcers suffered by diabetics.

Cells taken from the foreskins of newly circumcised boys are used to seed the mesh and the skin grows in an incubator that mimics conditions in the womb over two weeks.

Dr Gail Naughton, inventor of the technique known as tissue engineering, said it was already being used to grow other body parts, including whole bones and living joints, incorporating bone and cartilage together.

Living joints had been successfully transplanted into animals said Dr Naughton, who is president of Advanced Tissue Sciences, a biotechnology company based in California.

The first human trials involving laboratory-grown cartilage are to begin in the United States and the United Kingdom next year.

"This is not science fiction. Physiological transplants replacing the plastic and metal currently used will happen some day," Dr Naughton said.

She added that the difficulties of growing human cells in the laboratory had been overcome by studying the normal growth process. That meant tight control of temperature, oxygen, nutrition and waste removal.

"In nine months in the womb a human develops from one cell to a fully grown foetus. By looking at the growing environment and what the cells need we have been able to mimic the state in the womb," Dr Naughton said.

"The only thing that limits transplant surgery is the availability of tissue and organs. Here we have the ability to grow tissue in the laboratory from starter cells that have been highly tested."

One cell bank taken from a single foreskin was enough to produce 5 million strips of Dermagraft skin.

The product, developed with Smith and Nephew, the pharmaceutical company, was designed for the treatment of foot ulcers. But Dr Naughton said that there was "no reason" why it should not be used to improve a scar.

"It could also be used to repair wrinkles. Collagen from cows has been tried but how much better to use human baby collagen," she said.

Livers had been grown for up to six months in culture and had made the right proteins and enzymes. Transplanting them was difficult because they needed a complex blood supply and they died before it could be established.

Heart muscle was "not difficult to grow at all", and a laboratory-grown version might one day be used to replace a patch of a diseased heart.

Trials of Dermagraft had shown that it speeded healing of foot ulcers in diabetics.

Although the product costs £250 for each small square, and eight are needed for implanting at one week intervals, the total cost is still less than with conventional treatment, according to a review of the product by the University of York Health Economics Consortium.



The former rugby star Andy Ripley, who at the age of 50 wants to row for Cambridge in next year's boat race. Photograph: Frank Coppi

Veteran oarsman's sporting challenge

Andy Ripley, ageing oarsman and former rugby star, has declared he wants to row for Cambridge in next year's boat race when he will be 50. Jeremy Laurence looks at the formidable physical and mental challenge he faces.

As sporting records go, it will be one of the toughest to crack. If Andy Ripley succeeds in his ambition to row for Cambridge next March, he will be the oldest ever blue in any major sport.

Mr Ripley, who has already made the 28-man training squad from which the Cambridge crew will be selected, will have to overcome declining lung and muscle function which are the inevitable legacy of age. But his fanatical fitness regime over the years since he was an England rugby international have given him an edge over younger rivals.

If selected, Mr Ripley's achievement would put other ageing sports stars in the shade. Stanley

Matthews played his last game for Stoke City in 1965 at the age of 50, having spent 33 years in the football league. Peter Shilton retired last season aged 47, and George Forman is still boxing more than two decades after his famous defeat by Muhammad Ali in the "rumble in the jungle" clash in Zaire in the 1970s. But none of these compares in terms of the physical demands that will be made on Mr Ripley.

At 6ft 5ins and weighing 17 stone the accountancy postgraduate is a huge man with extraordinary

aerobic fitness. He could run the 400m hurdles in under 53 seconds and took up triathlons in his forties. He ranked second last weekend in tests of strength output over six minutes, beating men half his age.

Robin Williams, the Cambridge coach said: "He is a big strong fit guy who despite the fact that he is twice the age of the people trialling with him is performing very well. By rights no one his age should be in with a shout, but he clearly is."

Mr Williams said that in addition to strength and fitness, rowing technique was "massively

important" as was the compatibility of the final crew. "How the eight fit together matters. Last year, Oxford had greater pulling power but we won."

The boat race lasts 15 to 20 minutes, depending on wind and tide, and is one of the toughest of all endurance races. It is quite different from rugby, with its stops and starts, and success depends on strength and the body's capacity to use oxygen efficiently.

Although Mr Ripley has been a champion indoor rower in his age group for many years and a winner of the BBC Superstars series, he will have to prove himself against younger men.

Dr Stephen Boucher, an exercise physiologist at the University of Exeter, said there was a decline in people's aerobic power after the third decade. Although training could postpone the decline, it could not stop it.

"I would expect even a highly trained athlete in their fifties to have an aerobic capacity below that of an athlete in their twenties. Even if you train tremendously hard you will not achieve the level of fitness you had then. The older you get the harder it is."

OLDIES PUT RIVALS IN THE SHADE



Stanley Matthews (left) played his last game at 50, while Peter Shilton and George Forman are still going strong in their forties

BMA raises fears over GP charges

Charging £10 for a GP consultation and £80 for a hospital stay would raise £5.5bn for the NHS. Jeremy Laurence says the British Medical Association claims charging would "put at risk" the founding principles of the service.

Making patients pay for medical care would be one way of easing the cash crisis in the National Health Service, but it would deter those in need and undermine the principle of equal care for all, doctors' leaders say.

In a report published today, the British Medical Association considers options for charging patients in order to raise the extra £1.5bn to £2bn it says is necessary over the next four years to raise spending to the level of comparable countries.

It considers four levels of charges for a GP consultation from £2.50 to £10 which would raise between £830m and £3.3bn. If charges were restricted to home visits or night visits only, the sums raised would be lower. A £10 night visit would bring in only £14.5m.

Hotel charges for hospital stays, set at a flat rate to cover bed and board, might range from £40 to £80 and would raise up to £2.5bn. However, if children under-16 and the over-65s were exempted, as currently for prescription charges, the sums raised would fall by half to a maximum of £1.3bn.

The report also examines the option of raising prescription charges, currently £5.65, to £7.50 or £10 which would raise up to an additional £250m if existing exemptions from the charge (covering 83 per cent of all items dispensed) were continued.

Other options examined include increased private medical insurance, a social insurance system and income generation from private patient units and partnerships with business.

But the report concludes that public funding from taxation remains the best way of paying for the NHS.

Dr John Chisholm, chairman of the BMA's general medical services committee, said: "The NHS was a social experiment that led the world, but it is now failing because of chronic underfunding, and can no longer provide a comprehensive service meeting all needs."

He added: "If resources cannot be increased, the Government must set national standards for what the NHS will and will not provide."

The report claims that while patient charges could generate substantial additional funds, they would "dissuade the more vulnerable sections of the population from seeking medical help".

This, says the BMA, would lead to more serious health problems in the future.

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A nurse treating a patient in the Western Cape. Millions of blacks receive no health care

Photograph: Ian Berry

Drugs giants flex muscles as SA tries to cut health bill

South Africa is daring to take on the major players of the pharmaceutical industry. Mary Braid watched the drugs multinationals fight back. It was not a pretty sight.

The heavy threats began on Monday. Merck, the major United States pharmaceutical corporation, warned that it might pull out of South Africa - taking thousands of jobs and a proposed 50 million rand (£7m) investment with it - if health minister Dr Nkosazana Zuma did not withdraw plans to import patented drugs.

Then the US waded in. With 12 American pharmaceutical companies, with a combined revenue of R705 billion (£100bn), operating in South Africa, the US ambassador James Joseph called for the removal of a clause in legislation aimed at curbing health costs.

On the face of it, the legislation proposed by the stubborn Dr Zuma, a juggernaut of a minister, is a modest one, and complies with the free-market principles so cherished by the pharmaceutical giants.

Struggling to create the country's first national health service, she wants the multinationals to reduce their South African prices. If they do not, she promises to buy their drugs from countries

where they already sell them cheaper.

Mr Joseph insisted that the clause overrode "universally accepted principles of patent protection": patents which the drug companies argue provide the investment for medical research. He also had a warning. The new legislation would send a negative signal about intellectual property rights to technology companies which might otherwise play a crucial role in South Africa's development.

Finally, the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers said the legislation's assault on patent protection could result in South Africa being denied access to any anti-Aids drugs which might come on the market. That is no idle threat in a country where HIV infection is rising at an alarming rate.

The drug companies insist that the move violates World Trade Organisation agreements. Dr Zuma disagrees. And she also promises that where company patents in SA have expired she will shop abroad for cheap generics, to encourage home producers of generics to cut their prices.

Dr Zuma's adviser, Dr Wilbert Banenberg of the World Health Organisation, calculates that R385 million (£57m) could be saved by buying cheaper drugs on the world market.

The companies insist they are being unfairly targeted and that South Africa's drug markup, of up to 82 per cent, is the fault of middle men and South Africa's inefficient and corrupt distribution system.

But Charles Medawar, author of several books on the pharmaceutical industry, says South Africa is getting the textbook treatment reserved for countries - particularly in the Third World where there is less trade muscle - who refuse to play the international pharmaceutical game. "The companies have a well-deserved reputation for overbearing behaviour," he said.

While the industry has a point about research funding,

its enormous profits suggest the balance is wrong. Mr Medawar says South Africa should ignore threats about access to future Aids drugs. The companies will undoubtedly price any new medication out of their pocket anyway.

Despite the might of the industry, rebellious occur from time to time and the pharmaceutical giants fight - and win - in almost every case. In the mid Eighties the government of Bangladesh attempted to introduce an essential drug list and remove many other products from the market. Its campaign collapsed within days of industry threats to deinvest. "It was a small market but the drug companies feared a domino effect," Mr Medawar said.

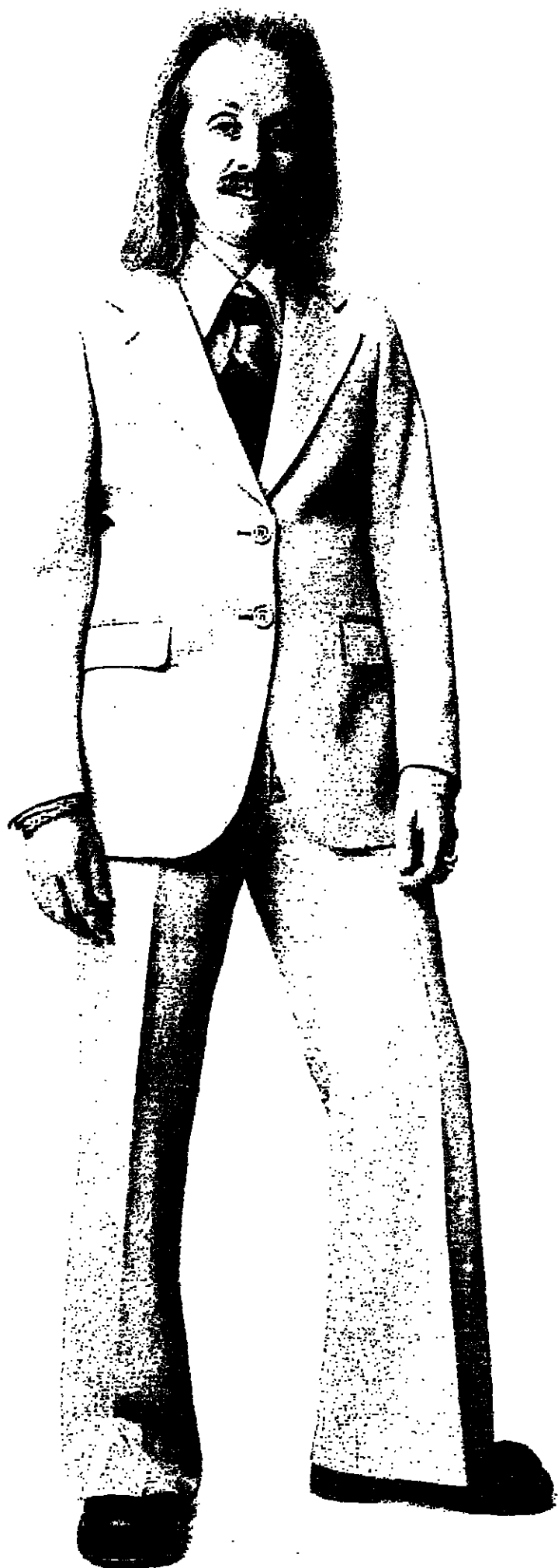
"These companies prefer a totally free, unregulated market and they have enormous resources and powerful backers. If it was possible we should place more emphasis on the rights and responsibilities of them than we do on governments. They are not elected and yet their managers take decisions which mean life and death to communities all over the world."

Dr Zuma is undoubtedly up against formidable opponents, and with wider trade implications affecting other ministries now spelled out, her chances of winning seem slim.

It does not help that she does not have the country's doctors fully on side. Her plans to introduce a year's compulsory community service for medical graduates, who normally make a beeline for the private sector, has caused some alienation.

The Medical Association of South Africa is also opposing Dr Zuma's intention to impose the use of generic medicines. There is evidence of overprescribing among doctors. The relationship between doctors and drug companies, already considered too cosy by the department of health, is also the target of planned Zuma legislation. It may be that she has taken on too many opponents at one time.

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Drought forces villagers to forage for jungle leaves

Hundreds of tribal people have died of starvation and millions more are at risk from a chronic drought on the huge tropical island of New Guinea. Severe frost following a six-month dry period, caused by the meteorological phenomenon El Nino, has wrecked crops. Richard Lloyd-Parry reports from Mount Hagen.

The Antara News Agency in Jakarta reported yesterday that 400 people in Irian Jaya, the Indonesian-controlled western half of the island, had so far died of malnutrition. In Papua New Guinea (PNG), in the eastern half of the island, villagers in parts of the remote highlands have been reduced to foraging for jungle ferns after a severe frost which has blighted vegetables already shrunk by the worst drought in living memory.

In Mount Hagen, the capital of Papua New Guinea's Western Highlands province, food prices have tripled, and in the worst-hit areas local people are surviving for days at a time on jungle leaves. The El Nino weather pattern, caused by warming sea temperatures in the Pacific, has reduced mountain streams to a trickle, 10m-deep wells have run dry, and hundreds of people have deserted mountain valleys in search of water.

Local government officials stress that it is not yet a "Somalian or Ethiopian situation", but unless heavy rains begin soon, they predict a catastrophe which will last well into next year. The highest estimate for PNG, so far unconfirmed, put

the number of dead at around 70, most of them elderly. But 31.2 million people, 85 per cent of the population, are subsistence farmers, many of them dependent on crops such as sweet potato which take a long time to grow. If the wet season does not begin soon, it will not only wipe out this season's crops, but also make it impossible to sow for next year.

"The problem is that we don't know if we're at the end of it, or in the middle of it," said Jack Karali of the Western Highlands provincial government. "The people haven't started killing their pigs yet, and there's always something they can eat from the jungle. But in the last three or four weeks, things have started to fall apart. If we continue without rain for the next month or so, we will be in serious trouble."

Papua New Guinea is a poor country whose central government is a substantial beneficiary of foreign aid hand-outs. A team of Australian experts has been conducting a survey of the entire country to assess priorities, but any relief effort faces enormous logistical and cultural difficulties.

Showers over the last three days have raised hopes that the crisis may be over, but they have also swamped dirt roads leading to some of the worst hit areas. This morning, officials from Mount Hagen will attempt to convoy food to the frost-stricken Tambul district, but relief efforts are complicated by the threat of so-called "rascals" - bandits who hold up vehicles, especially on slippery or rutted sections of road.

"They know that they will get the food eventually," says Mr Karali. "But we can't rule out the possibility that certain people may try to get their hands on it a bit earlier by unofficial means."

16/CLINTON'S TROUBLES

THE SCANDAL TRAIL

Paula Jones: 27 May 1998, has been set as the date for hearing the sexual harassment suit in which Ms Jones wants an admission from Mr Clinton that he made unwelcome sexual advances to her in 1991 when governor of Arkansas.

So far, Mr Clinton's attempts to settle without admitting guilt have failed, but with both parties running out of money an out-of-court settlement is still possible.

Whitewater: Three-year investigation led by independent prosecutor Kenneth Starr into the Clintons' involvement in an Arkansas land deal in the Eighties has so far failed to find evidence of illegality - although several of their associates in the deal have been convicted and gone to prison.

A key witness, Susan Mc-

Dougal, has been jailed in California for contempt of court after refusing to testify.

White House travel office: Whether Hillary Clinton lied about involvement in the dismissal of White House office travel staff in 1993. Investigation still in progress, but overtaken by other scandals.

Party funding: Did either Bill Clinton, or Al Gore break the law by receiving campaign funds from foreign interests and/or raising re-election funds from federal property?

The attorney-general Janet Reno decided last week that the investigation into Gore should be extended, but indicated that there was insufficient evidence against Clinton. That was before the discovery of the tapes.



Taped: President Clinton seen on video entertaining the donors in the White House

Cash inquiry senator rounds on the President

Clinton has been caught out again. Videotapes showing White House coffee mornings - whose purpose may or may not have been to solicit campaign funds - burst on to the political scene this week. Mary Dejevsky asks whether this time the mud will stick.

He is seen declining an offer of a cheque - a clear acknowledgement that he knew the requirements of law and propriety.

Until the tapes came to light, Mr Clinton had seemed to be almost home and dry on the party-funding issue. Fed with claims that his fundraising activities had broken the law, Mr Clinton had responded with a mixture of aggressive self-defence (he was only doing what the Republican Party did) and brazen denials (he did nothing illegal), political savvy (as he knew exactly where the line between legal and illegal ran) and a customary charm.

So successful was he, that Ms Reno, the government's chief law officer, had last week indicated in a letter to Republican senators that she had found no evidence that Mr Clinton had breached the law and it looked unlikely that she would extend her investigation beyond the initial 30 days. The same letter had explained her decision to extend a similar investigation into Vice-President Al Gore - a decision that could

threaten his prospects of being elected president in the year 2000.

Mr Gore, hitherto seen as the administration's Mr Clean, has been accused of breaking the law by soliciting campaign funds from federal property (the White House office), diverting "soft money" contribution from general party funds to specific re-election campaigns, and attending events (the dedication of a Buddhist temple in California) as Vice-president, when the purpose was to raise party funds.

Less practised than Mr Clinton at parrying attacks, Mr Gore had looked defensive and diffident and, whatever happens, his reputation is damaged. With Mr Clinton - who will not be starting for election again - the better discovery of the tapes could prove more damaging to the contents. And whatever Fred Thompson said yesterday it could be Jane Reno's head that rolls - for in sufficient rigor in her investigation - and not that of the President.

In one aspect, however, Mr Clinton appeared vindicated.



Janet Reno: Her inquiry could face criticism

to hell with it,
that'll do



well done!
fourth time lucky!

come on,
it was pretty tight

yep, it was an amazing display of
sheer parking genius.

I didn't want to
scuff the wheels, actually

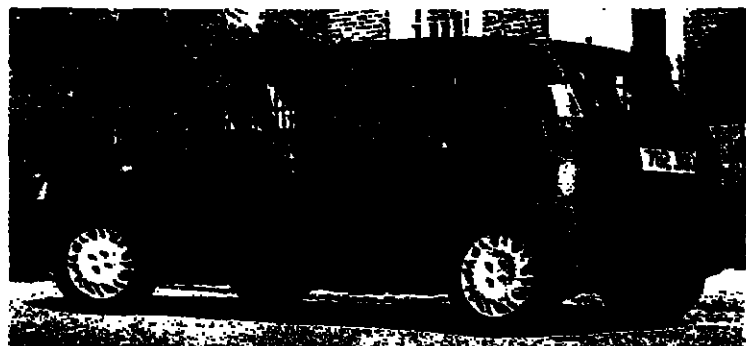
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A few good reasons not to be afraid of Edward Albee

'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?' made Edward Albee a household name. But, for 10 or 12 years, it looked like he'd been forgotten. Enter 'Three Tall Women' and a new run of successes on Broadway and in the West End. A delicate balance restored, he might say

In interview, playwrights rarely sound so very different from their plays. Tom Stoppard is witty and word perfect even with an audience of one; Simon Gray teeters mordantly on the edge of self-disgust in person as in prose; and offstage and on Jonathan Harvey is as camp as a Bedouin housing estate. Edward Albee's best known plays have the civilised exterior of East Coast comfort: there are no inarticulate Eddie Carbone in his view from the bridge, only profs and tennis club habitués and well-heeled products of the WASP factory. But open the front door and all you can see is rage and cruelty and slurring alcoholism.

Let's get one thing out of the way. Albee doesn't touch alcohol – or hasn't for over 20 years. But yes, the exterior is very civilised in a mud-coloured tweed sort of way. This is not an original observation, but he is the spitting image of Roy Strong, wiry and grey and long-faced (though with a much less horticultural moustache than either Strong's or the black ferret in his own absurdly out-of-date mugshot on the back of the Penguin edition of *Three Tall Women*). As for the rage and the cruelty, Albee would argue that his characters tend to display these as the result of a malaise that he himself has taken pains to avoid. "I've always thought there's nothing worse than coming to the end of your life and realising that you haven't participated in it, and so I write about people who have done that to a certain extent." A gym-honed 68, Albee is somewhere between the end and the middle of a life in which he has participated far more actively than George and Martha, the couple in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, whose idea of hell is each other.

So, there's daylight between him and the brooding despair of his characters. But that doesn't mean he's any easier to interview than his plays are to watch. His answers can be unusually short, as if, in his own certainty, he has no need of prolixity. And when they stretch their legs and wander about a bit, they seem to be using their length to crush the crassness out of the question. You can usually tell you've been dolish when the first word of his answer is "probably". As in, how do the ideas make their way into his head in the first place? "Probably because I'm a writer. And they're plays rather than novels because I am a playwright." Ouch. Or why did *Three Tall Women*, the first Albee play ever to earn unanimous critical approval, open in the New York equivalent of the Almeida? "Probably because Broadway management thought it was too – what's that terrible word? – dark. And also no chandeliers crashed to the floor."



The man who cried Woolf: 'I was a lousy novelist and not a great poet. I wasn't ready to be a playwright until I was 30'

Photo: John Lawrence



Revival of the fittest: Maggie Smith (left) in 'Three Tall Women'; Diana Rigg and David Suchet (right) in the Almeida's production of 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?'

Photos: Henrietta Butler/Sue Adler

Despite the safety-first policy on Broadway (carbon-copied, Albee believes, in London's West End), *Three Tall Women* – premiered in Vienna in 1991 and seen here three years later in a production starring Maggie Smith – rescued its author from

INTERVIEW BY JASPER REES

a slough of commercial despondency. Not that he quite sees it that way. "All that time, a 10- or 12-year period when I wasn't ever put on in New York or London. I had lots of plays in the rest of Europe, around the United States. Latin America, just not New York City. But everybody in the

theatre in America thinks New York City is the centre of the universe."

Whatever, the Almeida promptly caught the wave by reviving *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in a staging so successful that, in a coal-to-Newcastle kind of way, it made it all the way to Broadway. Thus Albee now has two influential patrons in Britain: a small but perfectly formed fringe theatre, and the West End impresario Robert Fox. Their roles in the resuscitation of his fortunes are in the process of being reversed. Having revived a hit from the 1960s, the Almeida will next year put on a brand-new play called *The Play About the Baby*. Fox, meanwhile, having earned his brownie points with a new Albee, now gets to revive *A Delicate Balance* in a production uniting Maggie Smith and *Three Tall Women*'s director Anthony Page.

Premiered on Broadway in 1966, *A Delicate Balance* has not been performed in London since Peter Hall's RSC production in 1970. It won Albee the first of his three Pulitzer Prizes by ruthlessly holding up a mirror to the predominantly middle-class audiences who would have seen it (and, indeed, will see it in this new revival). It tells of a wealthy suburban couple, Agnes and Tobias, who enjoy a smoothly oiled marriage at odds with both the serial nuptials of their unstable only daughter Julia – who drops by in-between divorces – and the alcoholic depression of Agnes's live-in sister Claire. This ménage would function on a perfectly civil war footing were it not for the impromptu invasion of Agnes and Tobias's oldest friends Edna and Harry, who are sitting at home one Friday night and suddenly, for no explicable reason, get

frightened. They move in with their best pals, on the shared assumption that they'd always be willing to return the compliment, only to trigger a nihilistic reassessment of the nature of friendship.

Albee swats away all my attempts to find a thematic link between *A Delicate Balance* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*. "George and Martha are about 20 years younger than the people in *A Delicate Balance*. The economic structure is different. The social structure is different. The education is different. It's all different." But what's ultimately the same is the bleak view of matrimony, which may or may not have something to do with his rather loveless upbringing as the adopted only child of a wealthy New York couple. (Albee has himself been in a relationship with another man for over 25 years.) The terror in *A Delicate Balance* goes unnamed,

but it is not confined to married heterosexuals. Albee says that "you become aware of it as soon as you realise you're going to die". When did he clock that one? "Quite young." Before or after 30? "Probably around that time. If you're aware of that, then you certainly know that you're supposed to live more fully."

At 30, when he realised he was going to die, Albee started to write performable plays. "I had written a three-act sex farce when I was 12. There were a couple of half-assed attempts at writing plays in my early 20s which I didn't finish. I was a lousy novelist and a not very good poet. I wasn't ready to be a playwright until I was 30." His first, *The Zoo Story*, was premiered in West Berlin in 1959 – Albee has never been out of fashion in Germany – in a double bill with Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*. "There was no off-Broadway and no one wanted an hour-long grumpy play by an unknown American on Broadway." He laughs and says, "That is still the position."

He quit delivering telegrams for Western Union, and within three years had written *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* ensuring that, however un-hip, he would never be unknown again. When John Steinbeck (the dedicatee of *A Delicate Balance*) was sent on a friendship mission to the Soviet Union in 1963, he insisted on taking Albee with him; he was thus in Poland when the President was assassinated. Some playwrights sit at their desk at home and let the grass grow under them. Not Albee, who is lucky enough to be able to write on planes. He has seen roughly 100 different productions of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and he polices it and other texts with fatherly protectiveness. He withdrew the rights to a production in Mexico when he heard they'd shortened it. He obliged them to change the set on the recent Broadway production of *A Delicate Balance*. "It was Bauhaus. I looked at it and said 'It's absolutely perfect. There's only one trouble. What's that?' Those people couldn't live there." He made it fairly obvious that he "loathed" John Napier's design for the Almeida production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*. "There was so much fucking carpentry and machinery backstage. You couldn't cross the stage behind, and I thought that was terrible. There is a thing about British set design. It's always calling attention to itself. I hate sets that make psychological or symbolic comments."

Other things for which Albee struggles to put together two good words: "the stability of the critical group" (except when it likes his plays); audiences ("trained to want less, to be satisfied with less"); playwrights ("who go on writing plays who haven't got an idea in their head"). This last, of course, will never happen to Albee. "When I have no ideas for plays, I hope I'll have the sense not to try to write them." There is a play called *The Goat* lined up behind *The Play About the Baby*. But we'll not know how fashionable Albee has actually become until both these plays have been run past the critical group. And the audience. *'A Delicate Balance' previews at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, London SW1, from Wed 15 Oct (booking: 0171-930 8800)*

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Play it any way you like it except safe

Thelma Holt, producer, chair of the Arts Council Drama Panel and recipient of a Laurence Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Theatre, recalls some of her theatrical highlights

I have always believed in the right to fail – if you see a piece of work that does not work but you see that somebody has been very brave, I find that more pleasurable than playing safe.

Take my production of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Who would have thought that strapping Janet McTeer – six-foot-one-and-a-bit – could play that fluffy little bird? But Janet was so brave there was no way she could have been just "all right" in that play. She was either going to give a definitive performance – and I very rarely say that – or fail so miserably it would have been embarrassing. [As it was, McTeer won both an Olivier and a Tony award for her performance.]

The most dangerous thing I ever did was to take a huge financial risk when I left the Na-



Holt: a woman on the edge
photo: Tony Buckingham

tional. Since I had no investors, I mortgaged my home to do *The Three Sisters* with the Redgrave. Eventually, though, we were laughing all the way to the bank.

Another time, I brought the Rustaveli Theatre Company over from Georgia just four days after the Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan. Each night there was a bomb threat, and we had to clear the theatre. It was some man from Stoke New-

ington, but he was terribly considerate because he always made the hoax at the same time. And every night two bus loads of police arrived to help evacuate the audience. On the last night, I asked if I could invite the police in for a drink with the company – something which was unheard of to the Georgians. And when the Rustaveli left, the No 2 at New Scotland Yard gave me a badge to give them. They

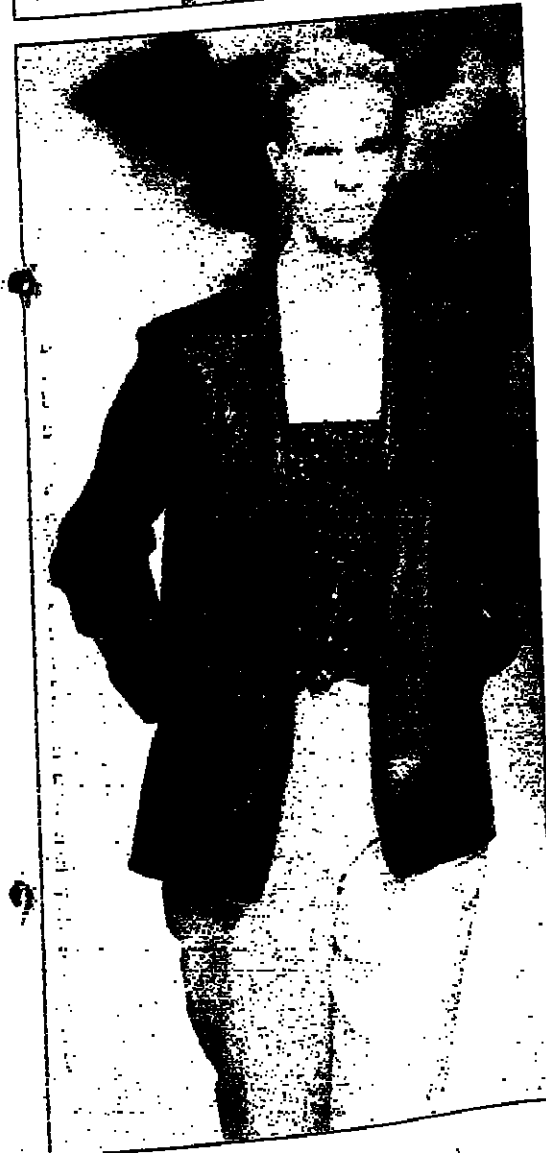
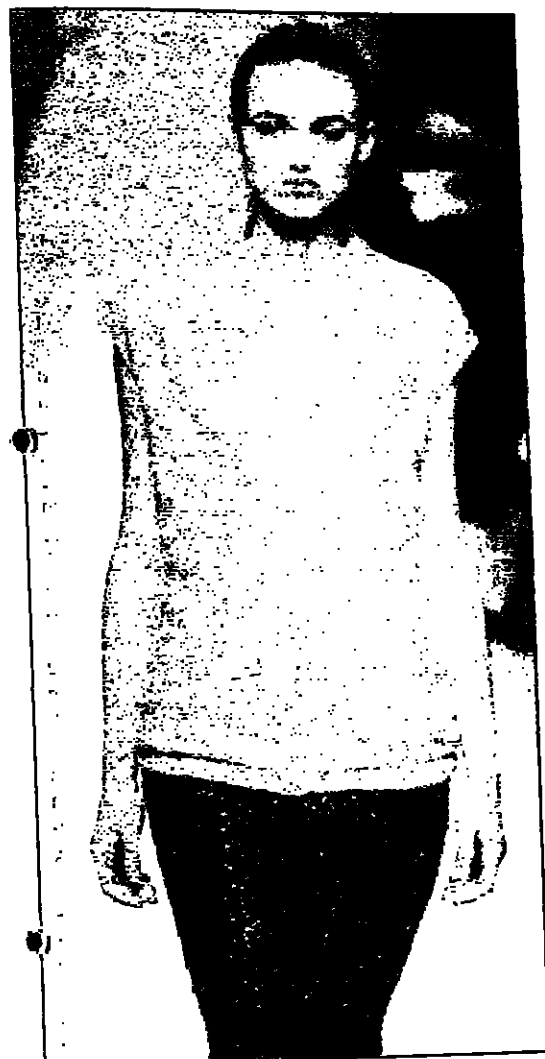
danger makes my adrenalin flow. Maybe it's because never in my life has there not been some kind of turbulence. I was a little girl during the Second World War; while I was at Rada, there was Korea; and when I started to be a thinking creature, there was Vietnam.

But I was spoilt rotten as a child: my father died when I was very small, and I think my mother over-compensated. When I went to Rada, that was the first real world I ever saw: it had not occurred to me for one second that everywhere I went they weren't thrilled to have me. I came down thinking I was 24 carat gold, and soon found out that I wasn't. I'm not 9 carat, I'm 18. I'm right to be aware of my own worth because I can immediately recognise talent in others. If you don't have any skills, you can't recognise them in anyone else.

Thelma Holt's production of Ninagawa's *'Shinokuni-Man'* is at the Barbican, London EC2 (0171 638 8891) from 15 to 18 Oct. Interview by Andrew G Marshall

Sheer gorgeousness – a first-timer conquers Milan

Narciso Rodriguez is the name and you probably haven't seen it before. He has been designing for Cerruti unseen (except by Sigourney Weaver, Clare Danes and the odd Kennedy wife). On Sunday he had his first show ever and it was a fashion moment to lift the spirits – nothing much to say about it except that the clothes were beautiful and wearable and they make women look sensational. Tamsin Blanchard met him on the morning after. Sensational he did not feel.



"I think my life began last night," says Narciso Rodriguez, slumped in an ornate gold armchair in the over-the-top Principe di Savoia, Milan's ritziest, most expensive hotel.

We had been scheduled to meet at 10.30am, 12 hours after his show. Not surprisingly, he shambles down from his room more than an hour late, bleary-eyed and shaky. "Champagne is a terrible thing," he complains. But he'd better get used to it. His life is going to be one long champagne flute from now on.

He had spent the night celebrating with his team, Massimo and Alberto Ferretti, who are manufacturing the line for him, and his parents, whom he flew over for the show and took to dinner at the Milanese fashion pack's favourite restaurant, Le Langhe. After that it was all back to the Principe to Demi Moore's presidential suite. ("It's got a swimming pool in the room," says Rodriguez in wide-eyed amazement. "the biggest hotel room I ever saw.")

Rodriguez is fabulous for one reason only – he makes clothes that make women look gorgeous. Until Sunday night there had never been a single dress or skirt bearing his name. His previous designs went under the label Cerruti. Before that, he worked for Calvin Klein. TSE – the American company specialising in modern cashmere – and Anne Klein when Donna Karan was the designer there. Donna has been supportive throughout, and now wishes him well as he makes the transition from designer to designer label. She, alone of her trade, sent him flowers to congratulate him on his debut collection.

"His show was a hit. Kate Moss said so, by ordering almost the entire collection; another model paid him his greatest compliment by simply saying, 'It's so nice to put on something sexy and classy. These are nice clothes.'" To some designers, the word "nice" would be the greatest insult. But to Rodriguez, a 36-year-old from New Jersey, the description is just perfect. He is not trying to challenge women, stun the world with his intellect or shock us with see-through underwear. All he wants is for women to look at his sequined slips and camisoles and sporty, luxurious separates on the rail, and want to wear them there and then. And if he achieves that, he is happy.

Narciso (pronounced Nar-see-so) has touched a nerve with fashionable women coming of age in the late Nineties. He produces clothes that are clean, modern, luxurious, as ostentatious or understated as the wearer wants them to be. There are simple organza piqué dresses, little sequined vests to be worn under relaxed grey tailoring, pencil skirts, unassuming knits that feel precious to wear, and the dress that every woman should own



Narciso Rodriguez creates clothes he is proud to call 'nice'. Actress Clare Danes, below, is one of many fans

next summer: short-sleeved, fitted and slightly flared, in bias-cut cheesecloth. Simple, flattering, elegant and clean. Colours echo the changing shades of sunset, from pale aquamarine and dove grey to rosy pink and midnight blue. No wonder Harrods and Harvey Nichols have already snapped up the collection.

In the short time Rodriguez was at Cerruti, he worked wonders. Suddenly, after just two seasons Cerruti became talked about as a label to be seen in.

Then he made the wedding



dress for Caroline Bessette, his friend from her days as press officer for Calvin Klein, who happened to be marrying John Kennedy Jr. and got a bit of attention, as you do. "I made a wedding dress for a really good friend and I think that brought a lot of attention to the work I was doing," says Rodriguez, ingeniously (or disingenuously) stretching his blue Dries Van Noten jumper, that looks as if he slept in it.

Perhaps it was a little too much attention for his employers' liking. He was stealing the limelight from the Cerruti family. They parted company with him last March, and Rodriguez was out of a job. But not for long. Never ones to miss out on a hot young designer, LVMH, owners of Givenchy and Dior, offered him a job as design director at the Spanish leather company Loewe. And the powerful Italian manufacturing group Erre, which also works with Gaultier and Rafal Ozbek, contacted him to see if he was thinking of starting his own collection.

Just over six months later, photographers are climbing in through the windows, a woman faints outside, fights are breaking out by the catwalk, and Narciso gives birth to his own label. "It was the easiest, happiest collection I ever put together. I felt free," Narciso tells me, well into his second cappuccino. Fashion has got too intellectual. For me it's about excitement, happiness, emotion, travelling, wanting to wear clothes again." He designs for women with busy lives, what he calls "active, fashion-intelligent women".

"You don't have to put a cockatoo on a girl's head to make her look different. It's been so many years of disposable fashion. But the more ugly clothes there are, the more pretty clothes I'll sell. You can create a buzz without making a spectacle."

Right now, the buzz is deafening. Rodriguez cannot really go wrong. As he sits in the bar of the Principe, American magazine editors blow air kisses and tell him the collection was fabulous. By next season, they will all be wearing his clothes too. And then Narciso Rodriguez will be really happy.

Catwalk photographs, from Narciso Rodriguez' Sunday evening show in Milan, by Andrew Thomas

Celebrity photographs: Rex Features

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BELOVED AND BONK

Diary of a divorce

It's the ramifications of it all that get to you. From the "who goes to sports day?" practicalities, to the fact that the kids take three hours to put to bed every night. That's because, in addition to the magnifying effect Beloved's departure has had on all normal problems (being put in goal for the match against Smallford Primary, having to eat Cheesy Wheel on Thursdays, not being allowed to have pierced ears, etc), there's all the wailing and moaning of "we want our Daddy" to be got through.

That's the only time I start to think really seriously vindictive thoughts, when I'm telling their crying little faces that Daddy still loves them. (Only, of course, not quite enough to actually be here in person. It's like being Jesus's representative on Earth when you've just converted to Judaism.) Bunny, my girl, said to me tonight: "I'll be scared to get married when I grow up." Whaddya say to something like that? "No, no, darling, I'm sure your marriage will be a beautiful thing that will last a lifetime", or "Don't be scared; just make sure you nail his balls to the floor six months before he turns 40".

One of the immediate practical ramifications is that when Beloved comes to fetch the kids I have to clear off, or I'd be holding on to his Armani turn-ups and begging him to return (or just stay for an hour and give me a light going over). And last week I cleared off to the coast to do a scuba-diving course, in an effort to become a New and Independent Woman (ie another bloody sad divorcee desperate for a lay).

About 50 per cent of the course was filling in insurance disclaimer forms to remove any responsibility from the diving school for my so much as breaking a nail whilst under their tuition. (I suspect Beloved has filled a similar type of form in triplicate somewhere along the line, removing from him any responsibility for anything at all in his life.) Anyway - one of the questions was "Next of Kin", in other words the name and contact details of the person who is the first to be rung up when my lifeless body is dragged from the water, when I have selflessly sacrificed myself to save 17 orphans and a celebrity dog from certain death. Do I fill in Beloved's name in this spot?

What would be more satisfying to my spirit, as it speeds away to another dimension (populated entirely by unspiritual incarnations of Nicholas Cage - you can tell how the hormone levels have gone, can't you? Week one it was Alan Rickman. Now it's Nicholas Cage), would it be more satisfying for him to find out from the full-page obituary a week later? Or to be phoned from the scene in time to rush to my still wet and neoprene-covered form and clutch me to his bosom in grief-stricken regret? Tricky.

I was having a "stuff off and die day" on that Saturday, a "plenty more sharks in the tank" day, so I left it blank to give me the middle option: track him down in 24 hours or so, so he has to come to the morgue, and he hates anything to do with hospitals. I mean, I spent the whole time while I was giving birth holding his hand and asking if he was OK. We even had to keep the radio going in the operating theatre to keep him from passing out. So one child was born to the theme from *Neighbours* and the other to a local radio news bulletin. You know the sort of thing. Local man passing by when something really important happened somewhere else.

Anyway, Saturday's "stuff off and die" mood didn't last, because the only other people on my course were a couple in the first throes of love's sweet dream. It wasn't a dive course they needed, more like the sort of surgery you do for Siamese twins. Thank God we were doing dive practice when we were in the pool - tanks, mask and regulator just prevented the *Kama Sutra* meets synchro-swimming. But only just. I didn't know where to look when they were doing the air-sharing exercise. I don't think the instructor noticed. Actually I think he's too young for sex. Although I did consider offering him a starter pack.

Seeing those two hot to trot in flippers made me start thinking about how cute Beloved used to look in the pool. (You can't really love a man, I always feel, unless you fancy him with his hair all soggy and water caught in his eyelashes.) So by Sunday night I was filling in the blank space with Beloved's new address: Beloved, Bonk's Basement, London. This provided perhaps the best option of all: the news is delivered to Bonk who has to break it to Beloved, and in that one moment of shock he looks at her face (which would be trying hard not to smile) and realises what a terrible mistake he has made. Yessss.

Stevie Morgan



Justin Worland, whose university existence kept him going when family life was rocked by his father's death

Photograph: Andrew Hasson

Just because they're campus kids doesn't mean the cord's been cut

As thousands of students begin university life, many parents are left wondering what to do with their sticks, pursue ambitions, or get divorced? But such decisions can alienate children, writes Shelley Bovey. Just because they're away, doesn't mean the children should be excluded.

If you feel like backpacking around the world the moment you have seen your child safely ensconced in a university hall of residence, think again. While we have been liberated from the gradual descent into old age, which was all our own parents had to look forward to, the current exhortation to get a life when the children leave can blind parents to the fact that their newly launched offspring are far from being fully fledged adult birds.

An announcement that you are turning their childhood bedroom into an office, study or even a guest room can considerably undermine their security. But there is a tendency to assume that this will not affect children who have begun to make lives of their own.

Not so, says Mark Phippen, head of counselling services at Cambridge University. "They want to feel included in any deci-

lose their roots. They need to come home and find their bedroom is still there, and all the familiar things. Before parents do their own thing, they should think about what effect it will have on their children."

University is a time of transition between home and the outside world, referred to by psychologists as "the launching phase". The excitement and tension of the preparations for a child's departure can bring a sense of relief to parents when it all goes well, but there comes a point when they wonder what they are going to do with their lives.

There is a temptation to fill the void, to do something new. There are jokes about moving so that parents can escape their children; one couple did just that, deliberately buying a small two-bedroomed bungalow so that their offspring could not come home. The message they gave their sons was clear and intentional. The relationship between those parents and their children is now, unsurprisingly, almost non-existent.

Another family moved when their daughter was away in India during a gap year. Although they allocated her a bedroom in the new house, she never felt it was home. The decision was a *fait accompli*.

"Parents make changes for all sorts of reasons but students want home still to be home," Mr Phippen says. "They want to feel included in any deci-

sions, and parents of grown-up children can overlook this. It may sound obvious but you need to discuss any plans with them. They will resent the apparent fact that the change has not been made with them in mind; they may even believe it is taking place because they have gone, and they will feel extremely alienated."

If a house move can shake a young person's sense of security, then the death of a parent rocks the foundations. Justin Worland was in his second year when his father was diagnosed as having testicular cancer, which quickly metastasised to his lungs and brain. He died five weeks before Justin's final. "We'd had a very stable, happy family life," says Justin, who is an only child. "Suddenly all that was gone. My dad was dying and I couldn't lean on my mum because she was caring for him and she had more than enough to cope with." Justin felt torn in two. He wanted to be with his parents but couldn't help feeling a huge sense of relief when it was time to go back to university.

"It was hard leaving mum to cope, but I dreaded going home. It was no longer secure, whereas university became a safe little bubble for me. But it wasn't reality. The reality was that my father was dying. The worst had happened and my security had gone." Each week-end Justin drove home, filled with dread as he rounded the corner to his house.

Two things kept Justin going: the loving support of his girlfriend and his flatmate, and his determination to do well. "Previously I'd been carefree and reckless. But when I saw my father struggling it made me buckle down." A good degree was Justin's tribute to the father who did not live to see it.

Some things cannot be helped or avoided. Death is one; divorce may be another. Parents who stay together "for the sake of the children" often find their marriage coming apart when the children have gone. And they may assume that children who have left home can cope with their parents' separation. The truth is that they are likely to be devastated.

Clare Carter learnt of her parents' impending divorce during the Easter vacation of her first year at university. "I went home," she says, "and they sat there and told me they were splitting up. They said they'd known it was on the cards for a long time but they wanted to get me established. By the time they told me, the proceedings were already under way."

Clare had known for a while that there were tensions and rows and undercurrents, but nobody had mentioned divorce. She returned to university feeling betrayed and sidelined. It proved all too easy to turn to the escapism provided by drugs, alcohol, endless nights of clubbing and days spent asleep.

Clare failed her first-year exams and left university for a job in a pub. Now, two years later, she is trying to put her life back together. She cannot shake off the feeling that she had been excluded from her parents' decisions and actions.

Children are vulnerable to divorce at any age, says Denise Knowles of Relate, "and additionally so when they first go away. The changes they have to make are a big stress until they establish coping strategies." While there is no point in staying in an unhappy marriage, Ms Knowles believes that couples "should examine their timing, long and hard. And if the separation is inevitable, they must involve the children every step of the way."

University counsellors see a number of students affected by their parents' divorce. It is typically the youngest sibling in the second term. Mr Phippen says. They get a letter or a phone call to say their parents are separating; to the parents it seems the ideal time. "Students come and say: 'I know I've left home, but this hurts enormously.'"

"There may not be the problems of custody and access but the informal equivalents still exist at this age. They ask questions like: 'where is home? How can I see both parents, and when?' Maintenance matters may be involved. It's absolutely crucial to talk through everything."

It is not uncommon for the children of divorcing parents to

blame themselves, and grown children are no exception. They may imagine that the financial burden of university fees had caused the rift. Or they may feel that their own absence has contributed to the break-up. "Maybe if I'd stayed and been supportive this wouldn't have happened," they say. In such a situation they are likely to pat themselves way down the list of priorities. Their distress precludes them from enjoying university and they may feel anger at their parents too. This cycle of misunderstandings can be pre-empted by ensuring simple communication in the first instance.

Going to university is about more than acquiring a degree. It is a rite of passage during which young people establish an identity and a new role. Students do a great deal of growing up at university, especially in the first year. Parents need to be aware that for some time their fledglings will have a foot in both camps and though they may appear independent - indeed may not even come home for vacations - it is not until after graduation that they really strike out on their own. What ever goes on at home in their absence, they need to be as much a part of it as they always were.

Shelley Bovey is the author of *The Empty Nest: When Children Leave Home*, published by Pandora-Harper Collins, at £3.99.

Shock! Men still aren't doing the housework! Well, neither am I...

Yet another report shows that men are still doing far less housework than women. Outrageous, says Ann Treneman, until she realises she doesn't spend 68 minutes a day cooking, 25 minutes doing the washing, 46 minutes shopping and 70 minutes cleaning either.

My family has clean genes. My grandfather, for instance, was very big on sweeping the street. "No, not clean enough," he would say while inspecting the concrete as us kids lined up on the kerb with our brushes. My mother remembers this with actual affection as she wipes the kitchen counter for the 100th time that day. My sister's idea of a disaster is a dirty bowl left festering overnight in the sink.

So it really should not come as any surprise to discover that most women spend the most amazing amount of time slaving away in the home. But yesterday's report from the Office for National Statistics provided the usual shock to the system. I couldn't believe that every day we women spend an average of 68 minutes cooking,

86 minutes looking after children, 25 minutes doing the washing, 46 minutes shopping and 70 minutes cleaning.

After amazement came outrage because, of course, men do nothing like as much unpaid work. They spend a measly 28 minutes per day in the kitchen, 55 minutes looking after the kids, three minutes doing the washing, 26 minutes shopping and 43 minutes cleaning. "Typical!" I harrumph, sitting down to read the paper after "cooking" a breakfast of Fruit Loops (one minute to open the box, another minute to pour the milk).

This self-righteous glow lasted for a good period of time. It certainly lasted as the children made their own packed lunches and we all hunted through the overflow-

ing laundry basket for those missing pink ballet tights. I was not at all surprised that they remained elusive: the house is a study in chaos.

It is at this point that the glow started to fade and was replaced by guilt. Seventy minutes of cleaning per day! I probably don't put in that much per week, much less per day. And who spends 68 minutes cooking, for goodness sake? And all along, there I was thinking that other people bought Marks & Spencer convenience foods as well.

The very first feminist book I read had huge chunks devoted to the "tyranny of housework". It explained how we women have reacted to the invention of labour-saving devices through the ages by setting high-

er and higher standards of cleanliness. The result is that we spend more and more time trying to erase less and less dirt.

I thought about my mother's gleaming house and realised that male hegemony was reflected in every shining counter. The last thing I'd do would be to repeat the pattern: the time had come to stop that endless cycle of vacuuming.

And I did. Cleaning was kept to a minimum. Ironing was declared the work of the devil. "You should be proud to be rumpled!" I exhorted the children. I took to collecting little sayings such as the (allegedly) Ethiopian proverb that says: "When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion." At some point even I realised that things couldn't go on like this, and I hired

the first of many cleaners (they usually fire me). She comes once a week for three hours. The latest Mintel survey showed that our spending on domestic service has gone up a whopping 294 per cent in just 10 years, and so clearly, I'm showing much more restraint than most.

There is one area where I exceed the norm, however. Do women, even working women, really only spend 86 minutes a day looking after children, as the survey suggests? I spend hours and hours doing this. Of course, men only put in 55 minutes, I note. Something doesn't quite add up here, but at least I'm back to feeling amazed at how hard we women work in the home. I think I'll just put my feet up and ponder that a little longer.

A dazzling Sun headline, but the truth was in the small print



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Regular *Independent* readers (who by definition, perhaps, rarely read *The Sun*) may be surprised to learn that that august organ not infrequently takes us to task for one thing and another. Most recently, the decision by our sister Sunday paper to promote the legalisation of soft drugs has attracted *The Sun's* indignant scorn. The flow of invective rarely runs the other way; after all, we know *The Sun* to be a decent, upstanding paper, concerned for the well-being of decent, upstanding folk. Why on earth should we want to knock it?

But - what the heck - just this once. Yesterday *The Sun* published a poll which it commissioned from MORI, a well-known and reputable outfit. The paper reported the results of this survey with great gusto: "BIG NO TO EURO IN SUN POLL - 81% REJECT BRUSSELS TAKE-OVER", the paper proclaimed. This headline was almost half-justified by the polling figures, but only on a very selective interpretation - which makes you wonder

how MORI allowed *The Sun* to get away with it. But give the paper its due: it had the decency to provide us with all the information, all the numbers, all the tables, which enabled the analytic reader to work out that the paper was talking a lot of hyped-up hooey about the results of the survey it commissioned. How many *Sun* readers bothered to read the tables, in order to discover that their paper was fibbing in a grand way, heaven alone knows. One or two perhaps. So we'd like to do the job for the rest of them. And an educative analysis it is, too.

It is true that 57 per cent of respondents opposed Britain participating in a single European currency, against 32 per cent supporting it. Roughly similar proportions opposed our participation in a European central bank. Surprise surprise: that much we already knew. Much more intriguing, though, is the real message from the poll, which *The Sun* made (for obvious reasons) no attempt whatever to extract. It is that,

by a conspicuous majority, British voters recognise that our future lies in Europe, most do not want out, and - here is the fascinating figure - more people do not actually think our participation in a single currency would be economically bad for us than the other way around.

Take a look at this. Asked if they thought their children would feel more or less a part of Europe, most people (59 per cent) said more. Asked if they thought there would be a United States of Europe, more than half thought it would happen by the year 2050, of whom more than half thought it would happen by 2010. And, when asked if joining a single currency would make people worse or better off, 49 per cent thought it would make no difference, or would leave them better off (most of those thought it would make no difference).

So what would be the honest story out of all this? It would be that the British people (particularly older ones, probably)

are unhappy, or at the least very nervous, about the risk of sacrificing their British identity to an unstoppable European political conglomerate. But they are also quite sensible, in that they do not mostly think they will be harmed by the direction they see Britain and Europe going in. They are unenthusiastic, but they are not, by and large, scared. The fear, it seems, lies in the headlines and the right-wing rhetoric, not in the hearts of the voters.

This is a salutary lesson, and one that the Conservative party meeting up in Blackpool this week would do well to heed. Do not knee-jerk, dear Tories, in response to *Sun* stories, or *Telegraph* leaders, or the closed xenophobic minds of throwback politicians like Norman Tebbit (whose Powellite inanities over the past week should be regarded as an embarrassment, but not a serious threat to mainstream Toryism).

Political leadership in Britain over the next few years will be defined, in great mea-

sure, by the ability to interpret and articulate what the British people really feel about their relationship with Europe, and not by fantasising about what you might like them to feel. Voters are subtler and more complex than our current debate allows. They see this issue in three dimensions. They are anxious about some aspects of our future relationship with Europe, but mostly relaxed about others. *The Sun* may not understand this; more likely, it doesn't care. It has invested some faith in Tony Blair, and is now trying to bully him into believing that the overwhelming majority of Britons want to drive a stake through the heart of Europe. But Mr Blair is wiser than that: he will study the figures, just as we have done, because he knows that voters will, in the end, despise politicians who ignore the complexity of their views. And if the Conservative party has not learnt that lesson by now, all the palaver in Blackpool will be a waste of their time, and yours.

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number. Fax 0171 293 2050; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

LETTERS

NHS charges

Sir: The debate on health service charges can be expected to warm up as government departments move deeper into the spending-estimates round.

Charges have been a small part of the NHS since it was founded. None the less they still form a very small part of NHS income (2.3 per cent in 1996). Increasing charges won't help cut waiting lists or fund pay increases for NHS staff.

They are not, however, imposed to raise money. Since the Marshall Plan in the 1940s, through the IMF in the 1960s to the present, they have had the two aims of impressing bankers with the Government's commitment to austerity and discouraging demand.

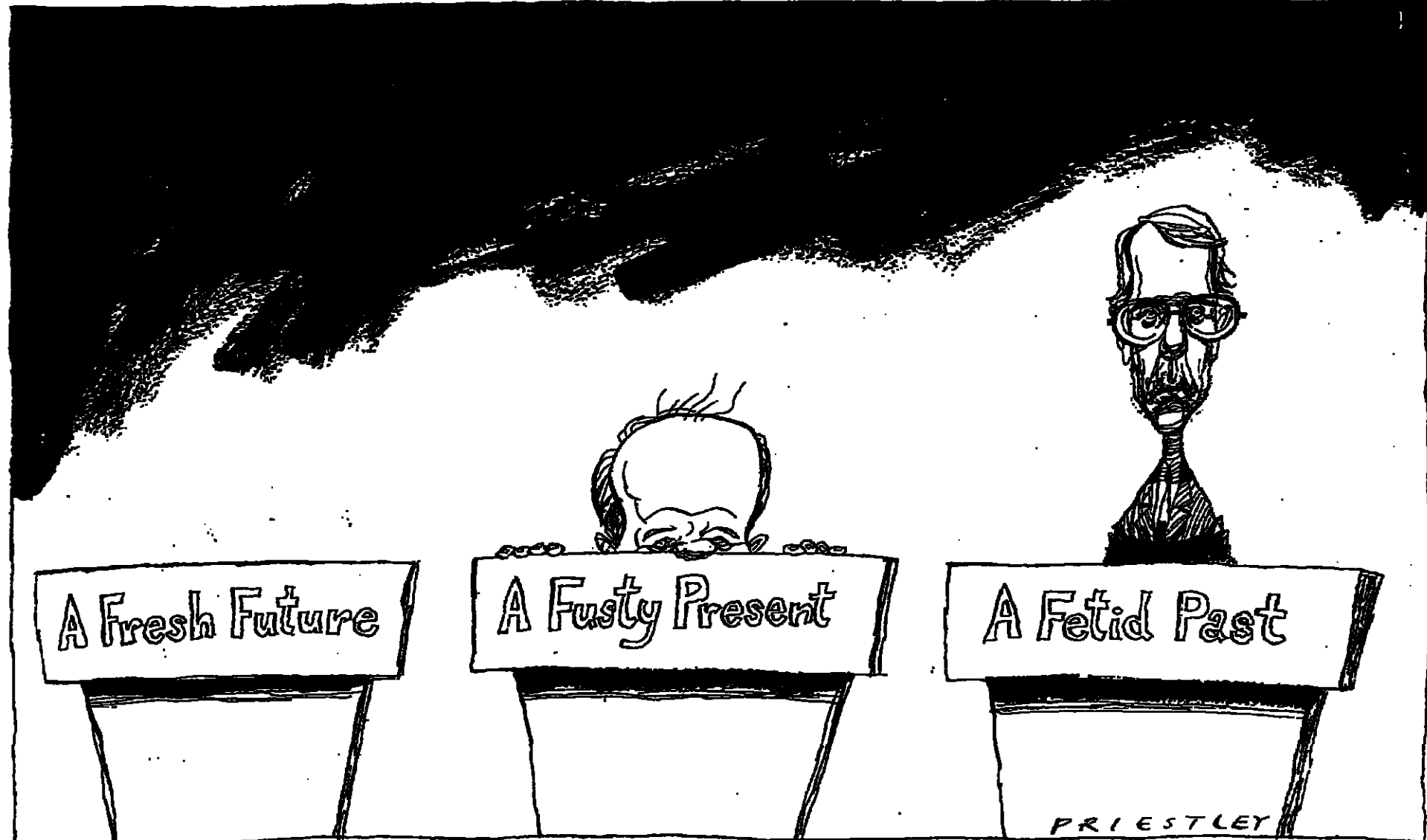
Charges aren't just a tax on the sick, they are particularly perverse one. They are generally levied on primary care: the cheapest, most cost-effective form of diagnosis and early intervention. Putting people off going to the GP, the dentist or the optician simply makes the crisis in hospitals even worse.

If the public want more and better health services, there are ways which would which require action on many levels: tackling poverty and poor housing; a coherent strategy for fluoridation of water; lifting the pressures which lead individuals to smoke, drink alcohol to excess and have poor diets; channelling pharmaceutical industry profits into the areas of research and education which the NHS prioritises; and tackling waste in the NHS, such as in supplies and computing.

JOHN EVERSOLEY
Senior Research Fellow
Public Policy Research Unit
Queen Mary and Westfield
College
University of London

Sir: A large proportion of GP consultations end quickly with the doctor saying: "Well, I'm sure this is nothing serious and that it will clear up in a few days; but if it doesn't don't hesitate to come and see me again." This is a very cheap way of using the doctor's knowledge and experience. Most patients do not need to come back. It is one of the reasons why the GP service gives such good value for money.

If you ask the patient to pay for this two-minute consultation, he will want a full physical ex-



amination, an X-ray, blood tests - the lot. As a retired GP, I am not in principle against the idea of charging people for the doctor's services; but if we are to go down that road, as the British Medical Association is now suggesting (report, 3 October), then the system will break down unless patients are given the option of a very cheap, or preferably free, two minutes with the doctor, which if it does not resolve the matter, can lead to a longer, more expensive, consultation.

Dr ROGER JAMES
Portsmouth, Hampshire

Sir: Polly Toynbee writes sharply as always ("As the season of suffering looms, doctors should be brought to account", 6 October) and in some cases she is on the button about doctors' influence on the finance of the NHS.

However, she gives the impression that doctors are lazy and interested only in financial or

other personal gain. Most doctors do work hard, often too hard to have time to adequately keep up with training and reading myriad journals, (a well-recognised problem) and high rates of suicide, alcoholism and divorce point to the effect their work on behalf of the NHS has on them. Swanning off to the Bahamas is unlikely to be contributing.

Interest in remuneration above the basic salary is understandable. A junior doctor on call overnight works for less than the cleaners in the hospital and a consultant's basic salary equates with that of an associate solicitor in a provincial legal firm. This reflects not only the fact that we work in the public sector, but also the failure of the last government to fulfil the pay review body's recommendations.

SIMON GRANT
Senior Registrar in Obstetrics and Gynaecology
Birmingham Women's Hospital

Sir: Most doctors, Polly Toynbee says, "haven't a clue how they are doing", with "little idea what their own success rates are", as if patients, once treated or operated on are never seen again. Apart from follow-up of individual cases, often for several years, surgical departments also have regular audit sessions, with emphasis on discussing morbidity and mortality. Audit is considered an essential part of surgical training, and all trainees are required to keep a log book.

Dr KELVIN CHOO
Mold, Flintshire

Watching you

Sir: Your report "If you're black or pretty, big brother's watching you" (29 September) gives the impression of all closed circuit television (CCTV) schemes being staffed by operators who "appear to be big-

ots, who often watch people for no good reason".

Lincoln City Council operates a successful city centre CCTV crime surveillance system. All the operators are employed directly by the council and were selected after a rigorous process including vetting by the police. This was followed by a three-week training course. The result has been an effective team of dedicated and committed officers.

The scheme is regulated to ensure an individual's right to privacy is not infringed. There is a code of practice, spot checks by internal audit, and a monthly inspection by a team of lay visitors. To date no complaints have been received.

There have been 310 arrests, due entirely to evidence provided by CCTV, during the first year of the scheme. This figure has risen to an average of 43 arrests per month, and there has not been a noticeable

displacement of crime into other areas.

There are numerous CCTV schemes operated by local authorities which consistently reduce crime, protect public safety, operate without discrimination and offer real benefits to the community.

R M SHARDLOW
City Engineer and Surveyor
City of Lincoln

Poems children like

Sir: We have been conducting a search to discover Northamptonshire's favourite poem. The nominations by adults are overwhelmingly the works of dead poets, whereas children have voted for living writers. As Ruth Padel points out ("Two educated, too busy and too hip for poetry", 7 October), it is a mystery why contemporary poetry is not more popular with more adults - children seem to recognise its value and relevance to their lives (and would like Granny to be a Sumo Wrestler, as in Gareth Owen's poem).

MADELINE HEANEY
Literature Development
Officer
Libraries and Information
Service
Northamptonshire County
Council

Profits from Diana

Sir: You report (6 October) that Michael O'Mara, the publisher of *Diana, Her True Story - In Her Own Words*, may establish a new charity dedicated to the removal and banning of land mines if the charities to which he planned to make a "substantial" donation decide not to accept his money. Apparently, the chief executives of the proposed recipient charities said they would not accept what they saw as "dirty money". Two points arise.

First, there is clear legal authority that the trustees of an established charity cannot properly disclaim an unconditional gift of cash unless they can make out a case that, by accepting the gift, they would in some way prejudice or compromise the achievement of their charitable purposes. An order of the Charity Commissioners or of the court would normally be required before an unconditional gift of cash could be disclaimed. The grounds for granting such an order might include the adverse effect acceptance of the gift would have on the charity's supporters and/or beneficiaries.

Secondly, it is not for the chief executive of any charity to decide whether or not a "substantial" donation of cash should be refused. This is a matter for the trustees.

MOIRA PROTANI
MARK LACEY
Charities Group
S J Bervin & Co, Solicitors
London WC1

Nazis in Poland

Sir: In the photo caption accompanying your article "Church repents over wartime silence" (1 October), the writer refers to "Polish concentration camps". I believe that it means German concentration camps in Poland. This is not just a matter of semantics. We would not be happy if a wartime German camp in the Channel Islands was referred to as a "British camp".

MIKE HARRIS
London N10

A year to recycle

Sir: Sean Woods (Letters, 4 October) suggests that we should reset calendars to the year 1900 in order to defeat the computer industry's impending millennium doom. I propose an alternative: recycle the year 1999. The advantages of recycling are obvious; the millennium will not arrive until the computer industry is able to cure all its ills, the Government will be able to achieve all its year 2000 targets, the millennium dome will be completed in time and everyone will have sufficient opportunity to plan for the big event.

STUART BULL
Gainsborough,
Lincolnshire

Dodgy, manky, naff and yucky - the joys of the English language



MILES KINGDON

I am very glad to welcome back our language expert Professor Wordsmith, who has agreed yet again to emerge from the saloon bar and answer your questions on the ever-fascinating English language.

All yours, Prof!

I am intrigued by the presence of a clothes shop in my local high street called Naf. Why would a shop want to call itself by such a name? We don't get shoe shops called Slipshod or hairdressing salons called Unkempt, so why a clothes shop called Naf?

Professor Wordsmith writes: My understanding is that the Naf shops have an overseas origin, and wherever they come from, they probably didn't know the unfortunate conno-

tation of the word "naff" in English. They couldn't really change the name of the chain just to please the English, so they presumably decided to brazen it out.

It is interesting, incidentally, that the word "naff" is one of a select few slang words which are peculiar to England and unknown in America.

Are there many others? Professor Wordsmith writes: I started making a list of them the other day, and I got as far as "dodgy, manky, naff, yucky, yonks, tacky, kinky, skive, stropky, khazi, cazy and bolshy", when something happened.

What happened? Professor Wordsmith writes: I ran out of examples.

Oh, right. What's "cazy", by the way?

Professor Wordsmith writes: It's the only way I can think of writing the abbreviation for "casual". By the way, I was going to say that the misfortune of calling a clothes shop something like Naf is not confined to overseas people. We British too have made some strange errors in trade names.

Such as? Professor Wordsmith writes: There was a kind of lorry called Foden - may still be, for all I know - which didn't sell well in Portugal.

Why not? Professor Wordsmith writes: Because "Foden" is a very rude word in Portuguese. Again, in German the word,

"mist" means "dung" or "shit", and I gather that Rolls-Royce had trouble selling quantities of their Silver Mist car over there. How the makers of Irish Mist got on, I do not know, but not well, I should imagine.

Next question, please! We are often told by the intellectuals that rhyme is old-fashioned. But it seems to be a powerful popular instinct to use rhyme, in expressions like "pub grub", "nighag", "razzle-dazzle" and so on. Why haven't the intellectuals noticed this?

Professor Wordsmith writes: Oh, but they have. They do it themselves. Listen to a programme such as Melvyn Bragg's *Start the Week*, and as soon as they start rehearsing the herodity vs environment

argument, someone is bound to say, "Oh, nature vs nurture". And it's a rare week that nobody says "descriptive, not prescriptive". What I am waiting for now is "Nature vs Nietzsche".

Mr Will Wyatt was quoted in this space yesterday as saying: "I hope we didn't overly suggest...". Is this word "overly" a new one coined by the BBC, or is it legit?

Professor Wordsmith writes: Oh, no, it's a proper word all right, as long as it is used in front of an adjective, as in "his films were overly violent". Mr Wyatt's usage was incorrect, because he used it before a verb. The BBC is not what it was, I fear.

It certainly isn't. I noticed not

so long ago that Sue Lawley on *Desert Island Discs* pronounced *Gervase de Peyer's* surname as "Pay-yay", whereas Radio 3 announcers always call him "de Pie-er". Is it possible to pronounce a name two different ways?

Professor Wordsmith writes: Yes. The right way and the wrong way. Miss Lawley was wrong. But I have noticed that Radio 3 gets things wrong as well. There is an American composer called Gottschalk who is often pronounced by them as "Gott's chalk". In fact, it should be pronounced "Gottshalk", as it comes from a German word *Schalk*, meaning "rogue". In the same sort of way, we always pronounce the name Rothschild wrong, as

if it were "Roth's child". But the German origin is *rot* *Schild*, which means something like Red Shield. So we should really say "Rotshild".

Isn't this all incredibly pedantic? Of course. Pedantry is my game. It is how I get my kicks, and also, I am glad to say, my living. Incidentally, Dr Webster of Aberdeen, thank you for your letter, and my answer is that the word you are thinking of is not "out tray" but *outré*. Both are, of course, pronounced exactly the same in your part of the world.

Do you want to help Professor Wordsmith stay solvent? Then keep those queries rolling in!

هكذا من الأصل

No, it's not a licence for dodgy scout-masters



ANDREW
MARR
THE GAY AGE
OF CONSENT

So, at least in civilian life, the last serious piece of legislation that treats homosexuality as a lesser, shameful expression of human love will be ditched. There will be a free vote: given the composition of the new Commons, it would be amazing if the age of consent isn't then lowered to 16. Liberals will celebrate. Conservatives will shudder, conjuring pictures of predatory older men invading suburbia and carrying off tousle-headed young men for a life of debauchery. I'm a liberal: but it is worth running through the hostile case in some detail.

Here, as I understand it, are the main arguments against changing the law. Homosexuality, through the "boy love" tradition, is more focused on youthful images: so boys require special protection. It may be one thing to get the law out of a relationship between two teenagers, but what about, you know, those dodgy scout-master types? Isn't youthful homosexuality a phase, something people mostly grow out of, unless they are "corrupted"? Is it really the case that, in our sex-obsessed society, it is a priority to legislate more of it?

There is one of those arguments I have some time for, but let's take them in order. There is a particular fascination with youth in gay culture, however inconvenient it is for liberals to admit it. Bits are presumably blatantly paedophile – but the same is true of macho heterosexual life, with its "red-blooded" approval of schoolgirl fantasies. So are young men at particular risk, in a way girls aren't? The evidence suggests that young men are sexually preyed on, by and large, where they are already in a position of weakness, where there is a power relationship. That has been so throughout the century in boarding schools, prisons, children's homes, and on the streets. The answers lie in internal regulation, and a continuing war on homelessness and youth prostitution.

In ordinary life, 16-year-olds are more knowledgeable than previous generations, and no less tough. They are far likelier to know words like "abuse" and "paedophile" and are, in that sense, better protected already. Anyone trying to "lure" a youth into homosexual activity against their will is likely to end up with a split lip. The main defence of gay youths against older men is the same one used by all young people against mature suitors – that they find them unappealing. In the sex war, whatever your orientation, the young are more heavily armed.

What about the "just a phase" argument? Can people be caught by homosexual culture

while they are confused about their sexuality and then hustled into a life they wouldn't otherwise have chosen? This implies that there is such a strong gay culture that it can dazzle and hold people against their will. But surely the opposite is true. We are utterly surrounded by heterosexual images and stereotypes, from films to TV to the press, to advertising of all kinds. If people were "turned" straight or gay by the power of culture, there would be no homosexuals left at all. What scientific evidence we have is all the other way – sexuality is more about the brain's wiring than the lure of the exciting left-apartment life led by chaps with other chaps in leather chaps and waterfall moustaches.

In the real world, families and parents will provide more than enough of a human barrier to thoughtlessly coming out, without the intervention of the law. And anyway, whenever the judicial process tries to lumber into intimate, consenting relations, it tends to be crude, blundering, and therefore cruel.

All of this said, and the case for the lowering of the age of consent established, does one lean back and applaud our sexual culture generally, for its maturity and common sense? No. Our culture has been over-sexualised. A balanced and mature culture would value friendship more than we do, and leave more admiring and conversational space for non-sexual relations of all kinds. It would be less goggle-eyed about genitalia and less titteringly obsessive about individuals' private lives.

A certain degree of privacy is essential to civilised existence. Yet health do-goodery, combined with the Oprah Winfreyfication of television, now classes everyone who hasn't an active and varied sex life as a sad human failure to be helped. Let me through, I'm a sexologist! It can only be a matter of time before the Department of Health issues advice on the right number of weekly orgasms and approved sexual positions.

Gay culture, assertive, garrulous, witty, pushing the boundaries, and carrying its own political agenda, has certainly been part of that post-Sixties, sort-of-Freudian sex campaign. It too has often been immature – though the triumphal celebration of promiscuous sex would probably have been in retreat by now even without Aids.

The early campaigners for changes to the law and for a more open attitude to sex assumed that it would lead to a less stressful, more grown-up atmosphere. Has it? Not a chance. The sexual pressures are different but as great as ever. We have leapt straight from repression to exhibitionism. "Adult" on a magazine or book or video, is a euphemism for porn. It is a good thing that people (mostly) aren't prosecuted for consensual private sex. But we seem to have become more open and tolerant – and yet more childish and prurient at the same time.

Maybe it's just a phase our country is going through, a time of juvenile "confusion" as we pass from legal and cultural repression to a calmer adulthood in the 2000s. Maybe we are still the children in the sweetspot. Certainly, there is some evidence that those cultures which were sexually liberated earlier, like Sweden and Denmark, are less infantile than we are today. Perhaps now, once this final act of decriminalisation has been carried through, we can all enjoy the ultimate sexual liberation – the freedom to treat what is ordinary and human as simply that.

Bring back the wolf, for a forest to last a thousand years



HAMISH
McRAE
MILLENNIUM
PROJECTS

How many of the various millennium projects are really about the next millennium? Try this test. Next time you hear of any of these projects – the things that are going into that dome, for starters – ask whether there is likely to be even the faintest memory of it in 1,000 years' time.

Virtually all the ideas being put forward are projects for the next 30 or, at most, 100 years. Unlike our ancestors, who built the medieval cathedrals (or even the Victorian sewers) we are not used to thinking very long term. Modern democratic governments cannot think that way: financial markets and corporations are pushed to think more than five or 10 years ahead. Yet our generation has this once-in-a-thousand-years shot at doing things which might be truly memorable.

This thought came to me last weekend as I walked round Loch Affric, in the western Highlands of Scotland. Glen Affric is interesting because it has a fine remnant of the great Caledonian Forest, which once covered most of the north of Scotland, and has been reduced to less than 1 per cent of its original area. Glen Affric is also the core of a project, which will take 250 years to be completed, to reforest an area of nearly 1,000 square miles with the natural species, mainly Scots pine, that once covered the region. It is a genuine millennium project, in the sense of putting back a large area of land to something like the state it was in 1,000 years ago.

This is not just a question of planting trees; the aim is to re-create conditions where the forest can develop on its own. The destruction has largely been the result of over-grazing by deer, which meant that the pines could not regenerate themselves. Deer numbers were once kept in check by the large mammals at the top of the food chain: wolves, of course, but also brown bears and



Hope for the future: Scots and Caledonian pines at Loch Affric

Photograph: John Paul

lynxes. When the large mammals were exterminated, deer numbers rose and the forest died. By the late Fifties only a few clumps of "grannies", trees several hundred years old, were left. Then the Forestry Commission fenced off an area of Glen Affric to keep most of the deer out. After a few years, young, naturally-generated Scots pines, children of the grannies, began to spring up. They didn't need to eliminate all the deer; just keeping the numbers down did the trick.

Since then, this work has been supplemented by Trees for Life, a small, volunteer organisation based at Findhorn near Inverness. It is working with a number of organisations, including Forest Enterprise, the Forestry Commission's environmental arm which now runs Affric, Scottish National Heritage, and the Millennium Forest for Scotland project, on its Big Idea. This is not just to re-create these 1,000 square miles, but also to link them with other areas of recreated native forest elsewhere in Scotland, eventually repopulating them with the large mammals that once lived there.

The idea of bringing back wild animals is not new: for example, the wolf has been reintroduced to Yellowstone Park in the US, and the Arabian oryx to Oman. There are obvious practical difficulties, quite

aside from the fact that sheep farmers do not go a bundle on having their flocks eaten by wolves, and that stalkers would resent having fewer deer to shoot. The present area of available wilderness, even in Scotland, would not yet be big enough to support a genetically viable wolf population. That is why this is truly a project for the next millennium. But Trees for Life believes we could make a start by reintroducing the beaver right away, and since wolves are pretty adaptable creatures there could be some selective introduction of wolves too.

The key point is that if you want a real, natural, self-sustaining forest you have to have the animals to maintain the natural balance. Bringing bears back to Scotland will to many people seem a ridiculous idea, but in the long term, in a couple of hundred years, it may be a realistic prospect. We don't need to make that decision; we simply have to make a start in encouraging the environment to reverse some of the damage we have done.

But what is the point? I suppose my own interest in this particular idea comes from family stories of the exploits of a great-grandfather who grew up in the region. But re-creating the Caledonian Forest is just one example of the sort of Big Idea that needs to be re-

peated thousands of times across the globe if we are to ensure the future of generations to come.

Stand back a moment. During the last 1,000 years the number of human beings has risen from a couple of hundred million to 6 billion. It is rising at full bore at the moment, adding between 80 and 90 million people each year. The world's population will level out at perhaps 10 billion in another 50 or 100 years' time. We have no idea whether the world can support 10 billion people – maybe it can, maybe it can't. But we do know that unless humankind tries to care for the planet, its seas and forests, we will probably shift the odds against our own survival as a species and we will certainly make the earth a less varied and interesting place for future generations.

But to succeed means not just being better environmental citizens now; it means thinking very long term. It means thinking, for example, about the reforestation of the Sahara. Remember that 2,000 years ago north Africa was the breadbasket of Europe. On a 300-year view it is plausible that the climatic change that led to the Sahara's desertification (and to

the collapse of north African grain production) could be reversed.

There are a host of other, mainly environmental projects where it is obviously in the self-interest of humankind that a process of destruction is reversed: the drying-up of the Aral Sea; the loss of fish stocks off Newfoundland. The trouble is that we don't have the mechanisms to think about this sort of idea: the market cannot help as it is too short-term, governments are too self-serving, and most international organisations too bureaucratic and politicised. So the really important millennium projects, the ones that really will be remembered in 1,000 years' time, will not, I suspect, in the main be "top-down". They will be bottom-up – projects envisioned by a few people with a big idea, such as the re-creation of the Caledonian Forest.

That just happens to be a British example of people coming together with a project that cannot possibly be completed in their lifetime. It is not even, in global terms, particularly important. But it is surely a prime example of the sort of thinking that needs to be multiplied many thousand-fold.

Does Ireland's destiny lie with a woman from the north?



DAVID
McKITTRICK
ON MARY
McALEESE

With Mary Robinson now in Geneva as UN Commissioner for human rights, the clear favourite to succeed her as president of the Irish Republic is a woman whose Belfast home was once machine-gunned by loyalists. The Republic may be on the point of choosing, for the first time ever, a woman from the north to be its president. The election of Mary McAleese would signify that the south is in the process of losing some of its aversion towards the violent north.

Her election would not be popular with northern Unionists, for it would represent the most visible sign yet of the northern Catholic minority's power, abilities and potential. But it would be a landmark in symbolising both how much Unionism has lost and how far nationalists have advanced.

Mrs McAleese is a highly complex woman. Once strongly supportive of the Catholic church, she has more recently been a trenchant critic. A child of the Troubles, who comes from the once politically impotent Belfast ghetto Catholicism, she has risen to become one of the city's most influential women.

The shooting attack came when she was a teenager in Ardoyne, one of Belfast's most violent districts. She once recalled: "My brother, who is deaf, was very badly beaten by a bunch of thugs at our front door. Then they shot dead our

neighbour, Gerry Kelly, in his shop. We thought we might get petrol-bombed but in fact they emptied the contents of two machine-guns through the windows. It was just God's mercy none of us was killed."

The family fled the district. Mrs McAleese, now 47 and married with three children, studied law at Queen's University in Belfast, then at a young age became Reid professor of law at Trinity College in Dublin, succeeding Mary Robinson in the post. She went on to become a familiar face as a broadcaster with RTE in Dublin.

Her evident ability and articulacy held out the promise of a southern political career, but when she stood for Fianna Fáil in 1987 she was defeated, and later that year she returned to academic life in the north. The job she took up, as director of the Institute of Legal Studies at Queen's University, was important for a number of reasons. The first was that Catholics, and Catholic women, were not normally appointed to such key posts; the second was that the candidate she defeated, the only other person on the short-list, was David Trimble, then a law lecturer, now leader of the Ulster Unionist party.

The fact that the job went to a nationalist woman rather than a Unionist man did not spark off huge publicity, but it sent shock waves through the Protestant establishment. A



Contender: Mary McAleese

senior professor at Queen's later described the university's background: "Historically, Queen's has been perceived as a Protestant university and some people believe that Queen's should remain a bastion of Unionism." There were questions in the House, with four MPs from Mr Trimble's party questioning Mrs McAleese's suitability for the post in the Commons. Some years later Mr Trimble returned to the attack, alleging that two further promotions she won were perceived as "a response to political nationalism and to some extent to pressure from Dublin and elsewhere".

The McAleese response was brisk: "The distillation of those questions was really – why was this Roman Catholic getting this job? There is a type of Unionist who simply cannot bear the thought of any Catholic getting anywhere on their own merits."

It is a frightening prospect for them.

When the university ran into deep trouble over religious imbalances in its workforce it turned to Mrs McAleese, among others, to supervise a wide-ranging affirmative action programme. Most of the inequities, and much of the old ethos, have now gone: "We've brought about seismic cultural change here," she later said.

Judging from her public utterances, seismic change was also the order of the day in her views on religious matters. Like so many Irish Catholics, she was outraged by the wave of scandals which swept through the church. Her personal attachment to her religion is as strong as ever, but in recent years she has been merciless in her criticism of her church's handling of child abuse cases. She denounced "a shabby, bleak procession of Pontius Pilate lookalikes, abusing priests, uninterested abbots, impotent cardinals and unempowered parents".

Yet another seismic change may be indicated by the fact that she is clear favourite, and is standing with the support of both parties in the south's governing coalition, Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats. Until now the southern electorate has been decidedly leery of northerners, with the conspicuous exception of John Hume. When Austin Currie, another northern nationalist,

unsuccessfully ran for the presidency in 1990, his party's research identified his northern background as the strongest negative element being held against him.

Mr Currie recently wrote that he understood why this should be: "The Provo murder campaign, Unionist intransigence, the 1974 Dublin-Monaghan bombings and the sense of continuing vulnerability, the cost in financial terms, the threat to jobs and tourism, northerners taking southern jobs, the fact that not all northerners are likeable people – is it surprising that some say to me they would like to see Northern Ireland sunk?"

So far at least Mrs McAleese's northern background is not being held against her, a sign perhaps that the ceasefires and the peace process have softened attitudes and made the south more welcoming towards northerners. Some observers predict that anti-northern feeling may yet well up, however, denying her victory.

If she wins, though, many Unionists may not be able to cope with the new breed of confident, articulate middle-class northern nationalists which she typifies. But southerners may finally be ready for a northerner, and one whose life has reflected so much of Ireland's recent eventful and often traumatic history.



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Inflation boosts benefits but brings no joy to the City

A higher headline rate of inflation last month means the state pension for a couple will climb above £100 a week for the first time next April. But Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, warns that this good news for pensioners is unlikely to please the Bank of England.

Retail price inflation climbed to 3.6 per cent in September, the month whose figure forms the basis for uprating a wide range of social security benefits from April. The figure, somewhat higher than the pundits expected, is good news for people receiving inflation-linked benefits like the state pension. Child benefit will also go up in line with prices.

The increase in headline inflation was due partly to higher mortgage payments. The underlying rate, which excludes these, declined to 2.7 per cent from 2.8 per cent in August and is likely to reach the Government's 2.5 per cent target before long.

Alistair Darling, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, said, ultra-cautiously, that the small fall in the target measure "provides further evidence that the economy is on course to get back on track".

However, economists in the City warned that the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee will still raise interest rates again. A few said they could even take action to slow the economy further after their meeting today and tomorrow. "I'd put the probability of an

increase this week as high as one in three," said David Walton of investment bank Goldman Sachs. He said rising headline inflation would have a knock-on effect to pay settlements at a time when earnings were already picking up.

Most experts reckon the Bank will hold off until November to get further evidence. But, even though the Confederation of British Industry said yesterday's inflation figures showed there was no need to increase the cost of borrowing again, the general reaction in the City was one of disappointment.

Although higher housing costs and food prices explained most of the rise in the headline rate, from 3.5 per cent the previous month, the strong pound should be helping reduce inflation faster. Economists said retailers were taking the opportunity to raise their margins in the face of strong consumer demand.

For example, the price of foreign holidays was 8 per cent higher than a year earlier, despite the drop in overseas costs in sterling terms. Even household goods inflation, at a low 0.9 per cent, has stayed flat for four months despite falling import prices.

David Bloom of James Capel said: "Goods prices should be falling more rapidly with the pound so strong, and services inflation has started to climb again."

Not all the analysts were so gloomy. Simon Briscoe at Nikko Europe said the figures fully justified a policy of "wait and see" on interest rates. But he, too, admitted that rising services prices were a worry.

Some services saw pronounced jumps last month. Estate agents pushed up their

fees by 2 per cent, and other housing-related costs like conveyancing fees also rose.

Private school fees at the start of the autumn term also had a noticeable impact on inflation, although mainly because their weight in the Retail Price Index has doubled since last year. This reflects their increased share in expenditure by families.

What's more, the decline in the underlying rate of inflation was fully explained by the cut in VAT on domestic energy to 5 per cent announced in the Budget. Big increases in excise duties that come into force in December will tend to push the rate back up.

The silver lining, at least for some, was the impact higher headline inflation has on many social security benefits.

The state pension for a couple will climb from £99.80 to £103.40. Child benefit is also to increase in line with prices, by 40 pence a week to £11.45 for the first child and by 30 pence a week to £9.30 for subsequent children, the Department for Social Security said.

Some other benefits, including the disability living allowance, incapacity benefit, sickness benefit and the invalid care allowance will also increase by 3.6 per cent from April.

However, some benefits are linked to a figure for inflation excluding most housing costs. These - income support, the Jobseeker's Allowance, Family Credit, housing benefit, council tax benefit and the disability working allowance - will go up by only 2.4 per cent.

And the DSS confirmed that the Government is sticking to its heavily criticised decision to live with the reduction in one-parent benefit announced by the Conservatives.



Helen Liddell, the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, with Stella Gardner, a home care officer from Poole, who has received thousands of pounds in redress for being mis-sold a personal pension by Abbey Life. Insurers yesterday claimed that they had cleared up 64 per cent of the 600,000 most urgent cases. A further 1.5 million people may be owed an average of £7,500 each. Photograph: Philip Meech

More sport 'listings' may benefit terrestrial TV

Football matches such as next Saturday's World Cup qualifier between England and Italy could be shown live on terrestrial television under proposals floated by television executives and likely to be considered by the Government in the coming weeks.

Cathy Newman reports.

This weekend's decisive game will only be shown live to

BSkyB subscribers, as it is not one of a range of "listed" sporting events which have to be shown on terrestrial television. However, senior television executives, who have been consulted by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) during its review of listed events, say the Government is considering suggestions that rights to events such as the World Cup should revert to terrestrial television if the England team reaches "decisive" - or qualifying - stages.

One senior television source, who has had conversations with the Government but declined to

be named, said: "The Government thinks there's a problem with events that run over a long period of time such as the Olympics or the World Cup. If you list all of them, terrestrial broadcasters don't have the capacity to carry everything, but if you don't list any, when you get a big decisive match, terrestrial television doesn't get the games live."

The DCMS has now finished consulting on which sporting events should be reserved for the BBC, ITV and Channel 4, and is soon to announce the formation of a working group to deliberate on

the subject. The group, which is to decide which sports should be protected by Christmas, will be made up of representatives from the media, sport and viewers' organisations.

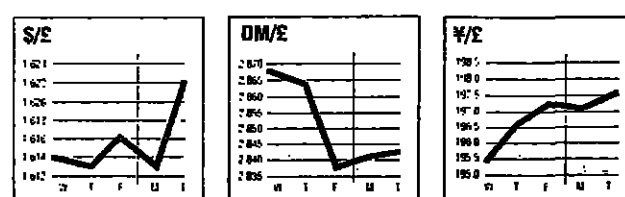
A DCMS spokesman said last night: "This is an industry idea that will no doubt be put to the working group when it's set up."

Listed events at the moment include cricket Test matches involving England, the Derby, the World Cup Finals, the FA Cup final, the Grand National, the Olympic Games, and the Wimbledon tennis championships. News that BSkyB's

grip on key sports events may be loosened once the Government's review is completed, coincided with somewhat bearish rumblings from News Corporation, owner of 40 per cent of the satellite broadcaster.

Rupert Murdoch, chairman of News Corp, sent BSkyB shares down as much as 8.5p to 457p at one stage after he said that the satellite broadcaster faced increased challenges over the next couple of years from cable operators. Speaking at News Corp's annual meeting in Adelaide, he said: "We see a flatish one to two years, but after that we see a brilliant future."

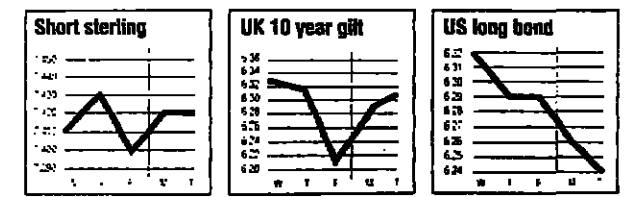
STOCK MARKETS



Down Jones index and graph in Spain

Index	Close	Change	Change(%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	5305.60	5.60	0.11	5330.80	3900.40	3.29
FTSE 250	4876.00	8.60	0.18	4883.90	4348.10	3.37
FTSE 350	2644.70	3.00	0.12	2655.30	1949.20	3.26
FTSE All Share	2483.45	3.20	0.13	2492.41	1928.79	3.28
FTSE SmallCap	2371.6	6.80	0.29	2374.20	2128.40	3.16
FTSE Hedges	1307.8	2.40	0.18	1346.50	1188.70	3.25
FTSE AIM	1009.8	3.60	0.36	1138.00	1002.10	0.98
Dow Jones	8147.37	44.69	0.55	8259.31	5921.87	1.64
Nikkei	17511.19	-313.59	-1.76	21612.30	17303.65	0.90
Hang Seng	14610.76	32.98	0.23	16673.27	12055.17	2.80
Dax	4307.39	5.26	0.12	4438.93	2639.25	1.85

INTEREST RATES



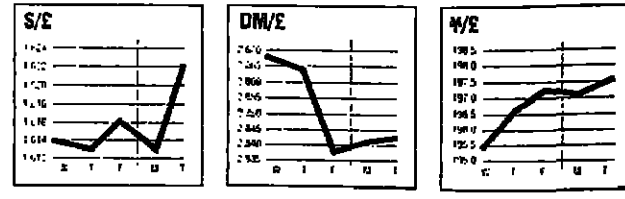
Money Market Rates

Index	3 month	1 yr	1 yr swap	1 yr swap	1 yr swap	1 yr swap
UK	7.37	1.43	7.57	1.32	8.51	-1.09
US	5.72	0.19	5.91	0.09	5.93	-0.59
Japan	5.53	0.03	5.58	-0.06	5.94	-0.85
Germany	3.40	0.29	3.76	0.52	5.44	-0.54

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chg	Falls	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chg
Becker Group	192.00	7.50	4.07	RJB Mining	283.00	-15.00	-5.03
Hilldown Hldgs	175.50	6.00	3.54	Racem	223.00	-9.50	-4.26
Liberty Int	515.50	17.00	3.40	Racal Electronics	265.50	-7.00	-2.67
Great Port Est	263.50	8.50	3.33	Medeva	203.5	-5.5	-2.63

CURRENCIES



at 5pm

Index	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago
Dollar	1.6204	+0.01c	1.5841	Shilling	0.6172	-0.25p
D-Mark	2.8457	+0.25pf	2.3937	D-Mark	1.7569	-0.56pf
Yen	197.59	+0.96	173.70	Yen	121.95	+0.09
S index	100.50	+0.30	87.10	S index	104.90	-0.20

OTHER INDICATORS

at 5pm

Index	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago
Brent Oil (\$)	20.85	0.31	24.11	GDP	112.80	3.50
Gold (\$)	331.85	-0.90	380.65	RPI	158.30	3.6
Silver (\$)	5.18	-0.10	4.86	Base Rates	7.00	5.75

www.bloomberg.com

source: Bloomberg

Power regulator wants tougher curbs

The electricity regulator yesterday called for tougher curbs on the industry and backed the idea of a single body to regulate both gas and power companies. The call came as he prepared to impose further price cuts worth up to £20 off the average bill. Michael Harrison reports.

Professor Stephen Littlechild, the director general of electricity supply, said there was an urgent need for new powers to protect customers and prevent electricity companies abusing their market power.

Among the proposals contained in his submission to the Government's review of utility regulation is a recommendation that the distribution and supply businesses of the regional electricity companies be split and put under separate ownership.

This would prevent the Rces from cross-subsidising their supply businesses when competition for domestic customers is introduced next year. It would also enable individual supply businesses to be taken over or merged with those of other Rces.

Professor Littlechild also

called for powers to strengthen transparency and accountability by, for instance, giving him the authority to publish information that the companies have so far withheld from the public domain on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

His submission also supports the case for merging the gas and electricity regulators into one body. Professor Littlechild, whose £109,000-a-year contract expires in August, 1999, would not say, however, whether he would apply for the job of combined regulator.

Clare Spottiswoode, the gas industry regulator, also supports a merger and has indicated she may not stay on when her current term of office expires next April unless the Government makes a speedy decision.

Professor Littlechild does not rule himself out of the running but he does describe the post of dual regulator as an "onerous job" with a heavy workload.

His submission also comes down against the concept of profit-sharing between shareholders and customers, arguing that this would create uncertainty about future electricity price levels and would be open to manipulation by the power companies themselves.

Professor Littlechild also

rejects the idea of replacing individual regulators with regulatory commissions that hold their deliberations in public, saying it could slow the decision-making process.

The President of the Board of Trade, Margaret Beckett, is expected to publish a Green Paper sometime in the New Year setting out how she plans to reform utility regulation. The proposals will take account of responses to the current consultation exercise. The timing of the Green Paper



Stephen Littlechild: Urgent need to protect customers

could hold up publication of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report into PacificCorp's £3.6bn bid for the Energy Group, which was referred by Mrs Beckett because of concerns that it raised issues which the existing regulatory framework could not handle.

The price curbs due to be announced next week are likely to see electricity bills fall by between 7 and 10 per cent over the two years starting next April. In the first year that would mean a reduction of between £12 and £19 in the average £270 annual bill.

The reductions are in addition to the price controls implemented in 1995 which run until 2000 and will effectively impose a limit on the charges that the 12 Rces can levy on their 23 million customers.

The price curbs will only be set for a two-year period because the hope after that is that competition in the domestic market will dictate prices.

Professor Littlechild believes that competition among suppliers will drive down the price at which supplies are bought from the big generators. At present generation accounts for 52 per cent of the average bill, distribution 29 per cent, supply 6 per cent and transmission 4 per cent.

Policyholders set for average £3,000 windfall

London Life or Australian Mutual Provident policyholders will receive average windfalls worth around £3,000 each in early January if AMP's 1.8m policyholders approve the change to a public company in a vote next month. Clifford German reports.

The shares on offer are free, and the benefits due to policyholders including future bonus expectations will not be adversely affected by the change, AMP chairman Ian Burgess told a public meeting in Sydney yesterday.

Every policyholder who had a valid policy on the two qualifying dates, 11 December last year and 10 September this year will be eligible to vote.

Each member will qualify for a minimum of 100 shares per policy, but unlike some UK demutualisations which gave all members an identical allocation AMP will allocate extra shares based on the size and age of the policies.

Joint policyholders will be awarded joint share holdings and some policyholders could get as much as £8,000 worth of shares.

The company has yet to announce any firm plans to list the shares in London, or to provide a cheap dealing service to allow policyholders to cash their windfalls.

AMP is anxious to retain as many shareholders as possible in order to protect itself from possible bids, but experience with building society conversions suggests anything from 25 per cent to 40 per cent of UK holders wanted cash rather than shares. The proportion could be higher if the shares are not listed in London, and a cheap dealing service will be in great demand.

No new money is being raised but AMP, which tried unsuccessfully to take over Scottish Amicable this year, is expected to use its new financial muscle to push ahead with plans to expand its presence in the UK. A London listing for the shares is a logical step to retaining a substantial number of UK shareholders and to making a big acquisition in the UK.

Just over 1 billion shares will be created, with an estimated value of A\$10.37 or 470p each if they had been traded last month, the company said yesterday.

The shares will be listed on the Australian and New Zealand stock exchange by the middle of next year, and it is widely expected the company will look for a listing in London as well in order to increase the marketability of the shares.

The 171,000 policyholders in the UK alone will benefit from windfalls worth at least £500m if the demutualisation goes ahead. They will receive information packs and voting forms through the post in the next few days with a deadline for postal votes of 18 November.

Mr Strong is to concentrate on marketing activities. WorldCom said his experience at British Airways, where he was marketing and operations director until his move to Sears, provided an ideal background.

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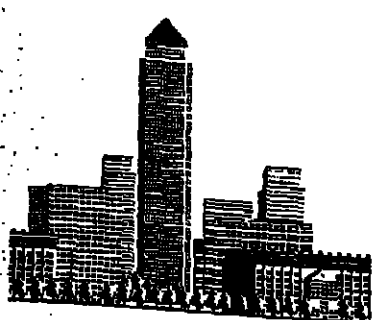
Mr Strong left Sears in April with a £450,000 pay-off and an entitlement to additional compensation if he failed to secure a commensurate job within nine months.

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OUTLOOK ON PROSPECTS FOR BSKYB, INTEREST RATES AND GEC

Sky stays one step ahead of the regulators

No wonder Sam Chisholm, chief executive of BSKYB, is leaving Rupert Murdoch, with whom Mr Chisholm seems to have fallen out, was at it again yesterday, pontificating on the other side of the world about prospects for BSKYB as if it were a wholly owned subsidiary of News Corporation. In fact it is only 49 per cent owned by News Corp and is a FTSE 100 stock. If anyone should have been commenting publicly about prospects for the satellite broadcaster, it ought to have been Sky itself in the form of a statement from the board.

When Mr Chisholm started to think in this fashion, he rapidly found himself going the way of all those who quarrel with Mr Murdoch - out the door. It's a shame he didn't put up more of a fight. If nothing else, it would have made good copy. It probably also would have enhanced Sky's value for other shareholders too, for Mr Chisholm is undoubtedly a serious loss to Sky, and it is plainly very much in Sky's interests politically to be seen as independent of Mr Murdoch. Still, it was not to be and for the moment Sky remains Mr Murdoch's creature, bent towards whatever purpose the wider business empire is following.

As it happens, Mr Murdoch is probably right in what he said about Sky at the News Corp annual general meeting in Adelaide yesterday. The high costs of investing in digital satellite and sluggish growth in the subscriber base is going to lead to a "flatish" one to two years in profits. More contentious is his observation that after that Sky has a "brilliant" future

ahead of it. This seems to be based largely on the idea that Sky is able to extend its present near monopoly of subscription television into the potentially much more lucrative era of pay-per-view. On this too, however, Mr Murdoch may be right. Attempts by the cable industry to challenge Sky's monopoly of sport and Hollywood have thus far met with only very limited success.

The only other potential competitor to Sky, digital terrestrial, has also largely been nubbled. Though Sky has been barred from equity participation in British Digital Broadcasting, it will be Sky sports and movie product that sustains the new platform for its first seven years of operation. The possibility that the European Commission would interfere and try to limit this agreement to, say, just two years, has largely receded. Scared off by the threat from BDB that digital terrestrial simply won't happen without the long term supply agreement with Sky, the Commission is unlikely to do anything more draconian than ban cross directorships.

For the foreseeable future, then, Sky seems to be sitting pretty, and despite Mr Chisholm's undesired demise, it's medium term prospects do indeed look sensationally good. Eventually, of course, when digital terrestrial is up and running and the supply contract with Sky has run its course, BDB will become a head to head competitor for Sky. But all that is too far in the future to concern anyone much right now. If Pearson and other large outside shareholders in Sky are indeed planning

to sell their remaining shares, they are choosing the wrong moment for it.

Time for another hike in rates

What sort of flight path should the fledgling Monetary Policy Committee be opting for as it takes wing? So far it hasn't put a foot wrong. After raising interest rates in its first three months of independent operation, it then achieved a real coup by announcing a "pause" which took the steam out of the soaring pound.

Most commentators have assumed that holding rates steady for just September would not in itself constitute a pause worthy of the name. Therefore, they argue, the MPC will do nothing after its meeting this week either, but rather will wait until November, by which time what's happening in the economy should be clearer.

The Bank should spring a surprise on them. The latest inflation figures suggest as clearly as they can that retail margins are expanding in the heat of consumer demand. The strong pound should mean a slowdown in price rises on the high street, but this is not the picture.

Other forward indicators of inflation give cause for concern as well. There is no sign of the collapse in export growth which the strong pound is supposed to cool the economy. Whatever measure you care to take - money growth, asset prices, the tight jobs market, pay awards - they

are all flashing amber. Price increases are not about to head off to the stratosphere. But the trends are not good enough to keep underlying inflation on target. The Monetary Policy Committee will only be doing its job properly if it delivers on the promise of small changes in interest rates early enough to avoid any danger of big increases later. With the fifth anniversary of Black Wednesday so fresh in our minds, this week is the time for a small increase to prove that Britain is capable of running a grown-up macroeconomic policy.

A break-up beckons for GEC

Today is the deadline Lord Simpson set himself three months ago for sorting out GEC's component parts. Unfortunately, there is unlikely to be any grand announcement from Stanhope Gate this morning, nor any puff of white smoke over Mayfair. Setting deadlines is usually a futile exercise, guaranteed to be all the more so when dependent on a lumbering giant like GEC being rolled into action.

So there will be no announcement today about the flotation of GEC Alsthom, the power engineering business that is jointly owned with Alcatel Alsthom. Nor will there be news of the "repositioning" of the telecoms joint venture GPT - a term which has generally been taken to mean the sale back to Siemens of GEC's 60 per cent stake. Nor will there be any news that GEC

Marconi has pulled off the grand restructuring of the European defence industry that will enable it to stand shoulder to shoulder with the likes of Raytheon, Lockheed Martin and Boeing of the US.

Since Lord Simpson began his strategic review a year ago the sand has shifted considerably under GEC's feet. One interpretation of the "rationalise or die" remark made on Monday by the Defence Secretary George Robertson, is that a merger of GEC Marconi and British Aerospace is back on the cards.

On the face of it, it would be remarkable if his opposite number at the Department of Trade and Industry, Mrs Blockitt, took a similar view, since every consolidating merger that has passed her way so far has been packed off to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. BAE and Marconi might just be different, however. Defence procurement is not a competitive market in any true sense since there is by and large, only one customer and the Ministry of Defence can always call on the Americans if it wants to keep the bidding open. So a merger with BAE cannot be ruled out.

The effect would be to turn Lord Simpson's strategic review into the piecemeal dismantling of GEC. With GEC Alsthom, GPT and Marconi all packaged off, that would only leave Lord Simpson with a rump industrial electronics business to run. Even that might be demerged into two given that half of it is made up of discrete US businesses that could be separately floated. What a tawdry end that would be for Lord Weinstock's great great creation.

BZW sale could be hindered by exodus

Fears were growing yesterday that Barclays will fail to retain key staff at BZW for long enough to finalise a satisfactory sale of the investment bank's equities and corporate finance arms. Tom Stevenson, Financial Editor, reports.

Morale at BZW has plummeted since last week's unexpected decision by Barclays to throw in the towel in investment banking and insiders are increasingly concerned that a flood of departures and the complexities of disaggregating the firm's divisions could make the business unsaleable.

Top executives at the treasury, fixed-income and corporate lending divisions of BZW are reported to be up in arms at the prospect of being folded into Barclays. They are angry that a policy of cross-fertilisation between equities, debt and fix, i-income business has been abandoned and unhappy about being absorbed into the vastly different culture of a clearing bank.

Barclays has already approved a £25m expansion of BZW's £100m bonus pool in a bid to tie key staff into the firm with attractive "golden handcuffs", but questions are being raised about how effective these payments will be in retaining executives for any length of time. Many are understood to be planning to accept the payments but move on as soon as they can if they are unhappy with the identity of any buyer.

The maelstrom of rumour surrounding the firm is confirmation in the eyes of many observers of the dangers inherent in the decision by Martin Taylor, chief executive of Barclays, to put BZW up for sale without securing a buyer. He claimed at the time of the announcement that he had no choice, given the certainty that unravelling a complex organisation like a merchant bank would result in a leak of the planned sale.

Going public with the decision to sell has, however, come in for almost universal criticism in the City. Mr Taylor flew to Italy last weekend to reassure the Italian government about the firm's commitment to the privatisation of Telecom Italia on which it is advising.

Staff, who have said they were deeply unimpressed by the under-confident manner in which Mr Taylor announced the decision to the investment bank last Friday morning, are also angry about his use of Goldman Sachs to handle the sale.

Shares in Barclays rose 12.5p yesterday to close at 1,692.5p, checking the falls since the announcement of the sale, as dealers speculated that a deal with Germany's Commerzbank might be close. Rumours that the board of the German bank met on Monday to discuss a deal were not confirmed yesterday.

Analysts said yesterday the danger facing Barclays is that it has to push the cost base of BZW so high to avoid large scale defections that would be buyers are either given the whip hand in negotiations or put off altogether.

Confusion over the deal puts increasing pressure on Martin Taylor, who put BZW up for sale in part to satisfy demands from institutional shareholders to increase group returns, but may inadvertently have destroyed shareholder value by bungling the sale of the investment bank.



Roger Paffard: Thorntons' new-broom chief executive is confident that the market will support his ambitious expansion plans

Thorntons plans to double its size

Thorntons, the chocolate retailer and manufacturer, plans to double its size over the next four years in a move expected to create 820 new jobs in the UK.

The company, which yesterday reported full-year profits up almost a third, says it wants to expand more aggressively in London and the South, taking the number of wholly-owned Thorntons shops from 300 to over 500 in four years and creating 520 new jobs.

However Roger Paffard, the group's new-broom chief executive, said plans to consolidate chocolate packing on to one site in Derbyshire and automate processes like chopping toffee, traditionally done by hand, would mean slower growth in jobs in manufacturing. Thorntons plans to create 300 new manufacturing jobs over four years compared to over 600 which would have been needed without the restructuring.

Speaking after the company posted a 32 per cent rise in profits to £11.5m in the year to June, excluding a £21.7m restructuring provision in 1996, Mr Paffard said he was confident the market could support the group's expansion plans which include 80 new and re-sited shops this year.

Previous mistakes, which saw the opening of too many small outlets in hard-to-reach locations, would not be repeated, he said. A £22m restructuring plan has involved expanding floor space to an optimum 450 square feet, siting stores in prime locations such as malls and shopping centres and locating in small market towns where competition is limited.

Thorntons is conducting trials of four branded coffee shops in the UK and launched a mail order catalogue in August.

—Sameena Ahmad
Investment column, page 26

IN BRIEF

Marks & Spencer to open stores in Poland

Marks & Spencer is to open franchise stores in Poland as part of its continued international expansion. The retailer has chosen MSF Polska, based in Warsaw, as its franchise partner, and aims to open its first store in Warsaw by the end of 1998 and then develop a chain throughout the main cities. MSF Polska is a new company made up of four partners with industrial, construction and retail experience. They will operate the franchise throughout Poland. M&S, which has stores in 32 countries, said sales trends at new outlets in Germany, the Czech Republic and Hungary had shown growing acceptance of its brand.

Retailers unaffected by Net

Shopping on the Internet is unlikely to become a serious danger to mainstream retailers, according to a new report published today by Verdict Research. The survey of electronic shopping says that electronic sales accounted for 0.07 per cent of retail spending by UK customers. The figure is forecast to rise to £2bn by 2001, though this will only represent 1 per cent of all retail spending. Verdict says the Internet is not user-friendly enough for mass-market acceptance. It also says that UK retail sites on the World Wide Web is inferior to those offered by US retailers.

Brussels clamps down on aid

The European Commission is expected to start formal proceedings against Sweden today for resisting new strict European Union rules on aid to the car industry. The Commission is trying to clamp down on subsidies to the automobile sector, which it says has received 31.4bn euros (£35bn) of public money in the last 20 years. Under new rules, to be implemented from 1 January 1998, EU governments will have to seek prior Commission approval for all subsidies to investment projects whose cost exceeds 50m euros.

Wembley allocated £21.5m

Wembley, the leisure group which runs Wembley stadium, announced yesterday that the English Sports Council has allocated an initial £21.5m towards funding a new English national stadium. The publicly quoted sports group, which runs the north London venue, said the allocation would be released at intervals.

BOC shares fall back

Shares in BOC Group fell back in late trading as hopes of the sale of its Ohmeda unit by the year end were dashed by the announcement that a shortlist of prospective buyers had only now been put together. The Ohmeda anaesthetics gases business was put up for sale in July, with price between £500m and £1bn suggested.

JJB Sports plans to expand in the South

JJB Sports unveiled an ambitious expansion plan in the South yesterday as continued buoyant trading in branded sportswear helped the Wigan-based retailer report doubled half-time profits and a 50 per cent jump in the interim dividend.

David Whelan, founder and 26 per cent shareholder, said trading had remained strong in the second half so far, although at a lower level than the 18 per cent like-for-like sales growth achieved in the first six months.

He added: "We believe that our strong expansion programme and the continuing demand for branded sports related products will result in a very satisfactory outcome to the whole year."

JJB, which came to the market at the end of 1994 at an equivalent share price of 76p, closed yesterday at 504p, 5p up on the day and close to its all-time high.

During the six months to July, JJB opened 20 stores. It is moving towards larger super-stores, which now account for 47 out of a total of 186. There are plans to open 25 more by the end of the year and 50 in 1998.

—Tom Stevenson
Investment column, page 26

'Phoenix' directors are on the rise

Corporate theft and unauthorised insurance business is on the increase, according to the annual report from the DTI's Investigations and Enforcement Directorate published yesterday.

The DTI received a record 1,297 complaints against companies in the year to March 1997. The main type of alleged misconduct was theft, up from 143 complaints in 1995/96 to 187 last year, and alleged unauthorised conduct of insurance business, up from 26 complaints to 51.

Complaints over alleged fraudulent trading fell during the same period from 61 complaints to 51.

During the same period the London Stock Exchange referred 36 cases of insider dealing to the DTI for possible investigation, up from 28 cases the previous year.

The Directorate has repeatedly been attacked in the past by MPs and insolvency practitioners for being inadequately resourced, considering the huge number of rogue directors and fraudsters operating today. Earlier this year, Nigel Griffiths, the incoming Competition and Consumer Affairs Minister, made it a pri-

ority to stamp out "phoenix" directors, who go bust leaving creditors out of pocket, only to re-appear elsewhere under a different trading name.

The Directorate has worked alongside Companies House to tackle the problem of phoenix directors. A record total of 1,219 directors were disqualified in 1996/97. Of these, 1,040 unfit directors were disqualified following the failure of their companies, while 179 were disqualified after being convicted of company related offences.

The DTI has wide powers to tackle corporate wrongdoing, and most of its investigations are carried out under the Companies Act. Last year the DTI launched 225 investigations involving 417 companies, and completed 221 investigations involving 408 companies. The figures for investigations launched were the highest ever.

Much of the DTI's work consisted of sifting through the vast number of complaints it receives from the public, companies and insolvency practitioners, and deciding which can be successfully pursued.

Last year the Directorate considered in detail complaints into 1,297 companies.

—John Willcock



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CAF

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY SAMEENA AHMAD

Thorntons keeps investors sweet

Customers of Thorntons, the luxury chocolate company, are not the only ones getting fat from the appointment of turnaround man Roger Paffard as chief executive. Mr Paffard's whirlwind plans to add more than 200 bigger and better-placed sweetshops to its portfolio of 300 in the next five years will certainly feed the fantasies of chocolate lovers.

Shareholders will also be feeling pretty satisfied. Since Mr Paffard joined almost two years ago and embarked on a radical store restructuring programme, Thorntons' share price has risen from a 135p five-year low. Yesterday's 32 per cent jump in full-year profits to £11.5m lifted the share price 7.5p to 248.5p, a new high.

The restructuring to increase floor space and re-site shops in better locations is paying off so far. Refitted stores yield an average 12 per cent higher sales and turnover at re-sited shops is some 30 per cent better. Thorntons is achieving healthy like-for-like sales growth, up almost 13 per cent in the year and 7.5 per cent in the current quarter. Plans to expand the product range to include children's chocolates, a huge market neglected so far, and more emphasis on impulse buys like chocolate bars rather than seasonal gifts, make sense.

But there are three main worries. Firstly, margins. Opening more shops in prime sites will mean higher rents. A shift away from gifts to everyday chocolates and cheaper kiddie offerings will also squeeze returns. Then there are huge costs associated with expansion. Mr Paffard's plans to open 148 more stores by 2000 than his original target call for an extra £40m on already hefty capital expenditure, pushing gearing to an uncomfortable 75 per cent.

Plans to consolidate chocolate packing into one factory and outsource and automate will save costs. The company also has strong cash flow. But Mr Paffard's expectations of a one-point lift in net margins in four years' time look a tight target. His promises to wipe out gearing in four years also look demanding.

The second issue is chocolate consumption. Given the rate of expansion, any tailing off of demand or switch to a competitor would hurt. Mr Paffard is re-

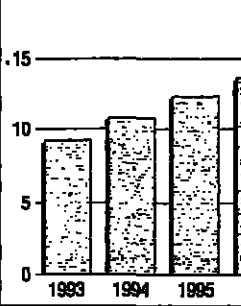
JJB Sport: At a glance

Market value: £454m, share price 504p

Trading Record	1996	1997	1998
Turnover (£m)	61.3	89.5	131
Pre-tax profits (£m)	7.2	14.5	22.6
Earnings per share (p)	6.25	9.25	14.5
Dividends per share (p)	1.27	1.27	1.27

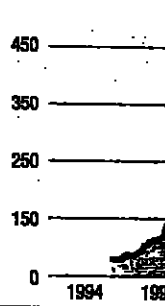
Operating margin

(%)



Share price

pence



assuring here, saying that chocolate consumption has grown steadily at around 3 per cent a year and may even be counter-cyclical - people buy chocolate to cheer them up during recession. He also points to the group's growing stronghold on the UK market, something that should deter competitors.

Finally, when Thorntons has finished coating the UK in sweet shops, where will it find growth? One idea being tested is Thornton coffee shops, but expect more news next year. Given the uncertainties, 20 times looks high enough.

JJB Sports keeps up the pace

JJB Sports, possibly the best managed of the specialist sports retailers to list in recent years, boasts an extraordinary record of earnings and share price growth. Over the past five years it has failed to grow earnings by more than 40 per cent just once.

Its share price has responded by rising in a more or less straight line from flotation at an equivalent of 76p in 1994 to yesterday's close of 504p, up 5p and

close to an all-time high. Interim figures yesterday unveiled an impressive doubling of pre-tax profits to £14.5m with sales 60 per cent ahead to £88.6m and earnings 110 per cent higher at 10.6p a share. Thanks to improving economies of scale as the chain is enlarged, JJB's return on sales improved from 13.1 per cent to 16.1 per cent.

JJB is rolling out its format at an impressive lick, adding 26 stores over the past year to a total of 186 and stating its intention to open another 50 during 1998. Despite that demanding programme, the balance sheet remains unencumbered with net cash of £10.8m. Cash flow per share continues to run ahead of earnings, always a good sign that profits are real.

The explosion of sports shops has been one of the remarkable retailing phenomena of the 1990s and anyone who has hidden the share price rises of JJB and peers such as Blacks Leisure will worry that the good times cannot continue. Certainly, competition is mounting from the likes of the supermarkets and growth in demand must eventually revert to the trend of consumer spending as a whole.

That said, JJB's earnings are expected to grow by more than one-third both this year and next. So a prospective PE ratio of around 20 is not unduly expensive.

Cobham looks over-rated

Shareholders in acquisitive engineering company Cobham have had a good run for their money. With the exception of a slight hiccup in late 1996, when a downturn in the fortunes of its electronics subsidiary Westwind prompted a profits warning, Cobham has gone from strength to strength.

The group's share price has soared recently, rising from 350p in April to 847.5p, up 1p yesterday, as the group posted a 20 per cent rise in half-year profits to June at £25m, beating expectations. The market was also cheered by news of Cobham's strong order book and a string of niche buys.

The year ahead for Cobham looks pretty solid. Its FR Aviation arm, which sells aircraft components, is currently refurbishing 21 Nimrod planes and looks set for more orders from the Ministry of Defence.

Demand is growing for its traditional flight refuelling services, including more business with the Singapore Air Force, and Chelton, which supplies radio antennae, looks set to benefit from the recent acquisition spree. Even problem child Westwind should have a good year, with a variety of innovations like low-cost scanners in the pipeline.

Cobham plans to splash some cash in the months to come. The group is budgeting for £15m-£20m of capital expenditure in the second half, most of which is earmarked for infrastructure improvements. Neither is the company ruling out further acquisitions. Gearing is expected to jump from 6.6 per cent to 40-5 per cent.

The real problem with Cobham is not its growth prospects or even its increased gearing level. The company is simply over-rated. Forecasts put it on a prospective p/e of more than 22, too high for a business predicted to grow profits by 19 per cent this year. Now may be the time for shareholders to sell out.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

JOHN WILLCOCK



Fancy buying a flat next to Tory Central Office? Richard Womack of property surveyors Hillier Parker has just sold the freehold of 32 Smith Square and its neighbour 67 Tufton Square to a couple of property development companies, who plan to convert the latter block from offices to flats. The Tories themselves will continue to enjoy the comforts of 32 Smith Square, which is let to them on a lease expiring in 2032 at a peppercorn rental. Next door, 67 Tufton Street is let to the Government and the Conservative Party on leases expiring in June 1999.

In due course Galliard Homes and London County Estates will send in the builders and convert the Tufton Street building into upmarket flats, just a few minutes' walk from the division bell in the House of Commons.

Mr Womack said: "The Conservatives could sell the lease to Smith Square if they wanted to and get a good price. It would make a fantastic residential development." It would also ease the party's cash crisis.

Mr Womack says the previous owners of the buildings, Royal and Sun Alliance Property Investments, put them up for sale in June, just a month after the election rout of their occupants.

Some genius at the Foreign Office has very diplomatically set the next G8 economic summit in Birmingham for 16 May - the same day as the FA Cup Final. This has sent a shiver of panic through the ranks of the footie-mad Treasury. Fanatics for the Game of Two Halves include the Chancellor Gordon Brown (who supports Raith Rovers), his financial adviser Ed Balls (Norwich), Charlie Whelan (Spurs) - he was most upset at recent press reports that he was an Arsenal supporter, Treasury press spokesman Peter Curwen (Aston Villa), Tony Blair's spokesman Alistair Campbell (Burnley) and the Bank of England's Mervyn King (Aston Villa).

And then there are the foreign delegates, who may well be interested in watching the final rather than chewing the cud about interest rates. Not to mention the press. I suggest this potential disaster could be turned into a diplomatic

triumph simply by providing a coach from Birmingham to Wembley for the day. Just a thought.

City law firm Linklaters has billed the "Paines" part of its title and gained a new logo, as it celebrates its move into plush refurbished offices at One Silk Street, next to the Barbican in London. Terence Kyle, managing partner, says relocating the firm's three London offices into one site marks a watershed in its history. The firm spent £55m on its new home for 1,700 head office staff. The new logo, by Saatchi & Saatchi Design, cost £130,000, and looks like two grand pianos viewed from above.

One Linklaters person who will not be making the move to Silk Street is Peter Langley, who is moving to Sidley & Austin, the American law firm. He will be helping Sidley & Austin to expand its intellectual property practice in Europe.

Thorntons, the chocolate makers, are launching a new range of themed chocolates and a whole string of new shops in Britain, according to Roger Paffard, chief executive.

Mr Paffard appears to be the man for the job. He's a former managing director of Staples, the office supply company, and was the brand manager in charge of the relaunch of Persil for Lever Brothers. He also revived the Clairol hair colour brand for Bristol Myers. Now he aims to double the size of Thorntons by the year 2000. The trouble is, he's run out of European themes for chocolates, so he has turned to Barry Callebaut, pastry chef at the Savoy, to come up with some more exotic ideas.

Step forward an American assortment, including Big Apple, Tumblered Whirl and Fudge Brownie Quarterback. Next is Caribbean and Latin American, and there are even plans for English chocolates branded as Earl Grey. Will they will taste of tea?

Mischon de Reya, solicitors to the late Diana, Princess of Wales, have received a writ from the family trust of Lord Palumbo, the Old Etonian property magnate who introduced the Princess to the firm. The writ was issued by Rughart Investment Trust (RIT), which accuses its former legal advisers Mischons and accountancy firm Binder Hamlyn of negligence, breach of contract and breach of fiduciary duty.

According to *The Lawyer* magazine, Lord Palumbo's son James and daughter Annabella took part in the management of the trust's assets in the spring of 1995 following a settlement of a legal dispute with their father, in which they alleged that he had mis-handled the trust's assets, leading to hefty losses. Mischons and Binders stopped acting for RIT in May 1995.

The writ also contains a claim by the trustees, TWM Trustees, and one of the trust's companies, City Acre Property Investment Trust, against Lord Mischon and Sir Charles Matthew Farrer, the former senior partner of Farrer & Co and former solicitor to the Queen.

The companies are claiming money allegedly paid to Lord Mischon and Sir Charles for a charitable trust in May 1989 for which they acted as trustees.

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- Voice Recognition: IBM VoicePro Simply Speaking GOLD is pre-installed and together with optional microphone allows you to command your PC and dictate virtually into any Windows 95 program!
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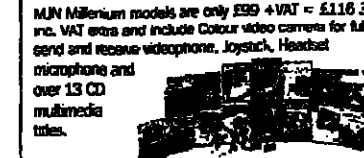
£1467.58
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£1249
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Model: 603

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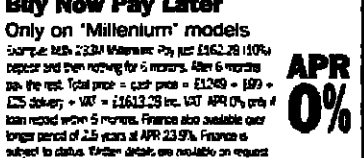
£1632.08
Including VAT

£1389
Plus VAT

Model: 605

Standard Features: Windows 95, Lotus SmartSuite 97, Quicken, PowerTools, DesignTools, HomeTools, Lotus email and SmartSuite, MJN internet, ATX system with 7 disc bay, Intel 430VX PC-97, chipset motherboard with advanced power management and 2 USB ports, SoundForce 525 main powered speaker system, 3.5" 1.44Mb floppy drive, PS/2 mouse, 105 keyboard, software MPEG, 1000 compact disc, PS/2 mouse port, fast serial port, parallel port and games port. 1 year warranty (extendable to 3 years).

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Financial sector heads for slowdown

The CBI yesterday published evidence of a slowdown in the financial services sector, with volumes of business growing at their slowest rate for 18 months. As Leo Paterson reports, these figures bolster the CBI's campaign for no change to interest rates.

The most recent CBI/Coopers & Lybrand financial services survey points to the conclusion that the sector has come off the boil. Though the level of business activity in financial services is still higher than normal, growth rates are starting to slow. Forty-six per cent of com-

panies reported increases in the volume of business in the last three months, but 20 per cent reported that business was down. Subtracting the laggards from the leaders gives a net total of 26 per cent, the headline figure used by the CBI to monitor business activity over time. In June this figure was 40 per cent, up from 39 per cent in March. Yesterday's headline figure was the lowest since March 1996.

Securities traders were the biggest losers, with the rate of decline in business volumes over the last three months the largest since March 1995. A net total of 77 per cent of respondents said business was down between June and September. But this fall in business volumes follows strong growth in the

previous three surveys and the CBI sees the decline as a correction following overheating in the sector.

With business activity in securities trading still at higher than normal levels, further correction is likely. Securities traders seem to agree, with business confidence sharply down, and a falling off in demand cited as the main constraint on growth for the coming year.

Though securities trading was the only sector to see an absolute fall in business volumes, growth also slowed for banks, finance houses and building societies. The CBI expects this trend to continue over the next three months, as do survey respondents. Business confidence in the sector as a whole is at its lowest cbb for over two years.

It was not all bad news, however, with business growth rates up for fund managers and insurers. Life insurance companies had a particularly good three months with business growing at its fastest rate since December 1996.

The CBI interprets this slowdown in financial services as part of a wider cooling off in the services sector. As a result, the CBI sees no need for the Monetary Policy Committee to raise interest rates this week, a move which would serve to dampen further demand in the services sector. Sudhir Junaankar, the CBI's Associate Director of Economic Analysis, said that he would like to see "interest rates left on hold at the moment".

Hogg Robinson buys Kuoni business travel operations

Hogg Robinson, the business travel group, continued its international expansion yesterday when it paid £300,000 for the business travel interests of continental travel company Kuoni. Hogg Robinson is taking over Kuoni's French and Italian operations, stepping up its rivalry with dominant player American Express.

The deal follows Hogg Robinson's decision to sell its transport interests for £14m earlier this year to concentrate solely on the business travel market.

David Radcliffe, chief executive, said: "Hogg Robinson has already announced its determination to develop further its business travel interests on a global basis and the acquisition of a significant presence in these two key markets is an important ingredient in that process."

Hogg Robinson is now only slightly behind Amex in business travel, with 13 per cent of the market in supplying tailor-made arrangements to suit the travel needs of companies in the UK as well as financial services

such as insurance. Hogg Robinson Business Travel International now numbers 6,000 clients within the UK. It is also a founder and managing partner of a worldwide partnership between organisations, Business Travel International (BTI).

The business travel market in the UK alone is estimated to be worth between £5bn and £7bn. It is dominated by three players - Amex, Hogg Robinson and Carlson Wagonlit.

Hogg Robinson controls travel expenditure of approximately £750m. A recent acquisition of a Nordic operation, Bennett's, will allow it to develop markets in Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark.

The moves are part of Mr Radcliffe's corporate strategy set out when he was appointed chief executive in June. The company is aiming to use its contacts within the Business Travel International partnership to rival Amex worldwide. Kuoni will be used to develop business travel operations in Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Hungary.

-Andrew Verity

Spilt Drinks in liquidation

The controversial alcopop market received a further setback yesterday when news emerged that the Spilt Drinks Company has gone out of business. The collapse follows a recent statement by Bass that sales of its market-leading Hooper's Hooch, are falling. Aply named Spilt Drinks, based in Exeter, makes the Jammin range of Caribbean fruit crushes. Sales of the range were expected to grow from 15 million bottles in 1996 to 20 million this year. However, Spilt Drinks, which is part of the 21st Century Drinks group, has been forced to call in accountants Ernst & Young to put the company into voluntary liquidation. The level of liabilities should emerge when creditors and shareholders meet on 15 October to discover why the business failed.

The failure is further evidence of growing pressures on the alcopop market following a Government crackdown on labelling and the sales of the drinks to young people. Alcopops have been criticised for looking too much like soft drinks and so tempting children to drink under age. Bass is the market leader in the alcopop market.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover (£m)	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Bancassurance Publishing (B)	4.75m (4.40m)	-367,000 (390,000)	-4.27p (-4.56p)	0.7p
Cobham (C)	151.1m (132.0m)	24.8m (20.8m)	18.2p (15.2p)	4.06p (3.5p)
Deutsche Bank (D)	5.07m (4.65m)	559,000 (476,000)	3.1p (3.9p)	0.6p
Esquire Products (E)	32.75m (25.25m)	1,500 (2,350)	1.6p (2.3p)	nil (0.57p)
James Watson (F)	78.25m (77.84m)	7.7m (10.6m)	14.14p (23.51p)	0.6p
LJB Sports (G)	88.57m (55.18m)	14.23m (7.34m)	10.56p (5.03p)	2.25p (1.5p)
Landmark Smith Thompson (H)	19.53m (13.57m)	1.4m (0.2m)	5.9p (1.4p)	1.1p (nil)
MSB International (I)	64.85m (28.95m)	3.71m (2.17m)	12.1p (7.0p)	3p
John Manners (J)	77.77m (67.78m)	6.23m (4.51m)	16.65p (12.07p)	8.3p
Pacific Energy (K)	24.62m (27.17m)	-30.32m (12.93m)	-11.6p (4.45p)	0.2p
Williams Sinclair (L)	56.23m (44.28m)	6.37m (6.33m)	18.5p (16.0p)	8.8p (8.0p)
Thorntons (M)	111.29m (87.57m)	11.54m (13.84m)	13.22p (8.79p)	5.86p (5.30p)
Walker Greenhalgh (N)	48.83m (51.45m)	4.52m (4.36m)	2.51p (2.45p)	1.3p (1.3p)

(F) - Fiat (I) - Interim 1 EPS is pre-exceptional *Dividend to be paid as a PD

[illegible][illegible]

Country	Starting	Dollar	Country	Starting	Dollar
Argentina	16236	10000	Oran	06239	02850
Brazil	17782	10973	Pakistan	65553	40450
China	16426	82645	Philippines	56721	35000
Czech Rep	52079	32688	Poland	14501	70000
Egypt	3385	3385	Romania	65996	35400
Greece	35953	22000	Russia	94967	59600
Hungary	37530	16456	Saudi Arabia	14757	97000
India	50595	35150	Taiwan	2245	36180
Indonesia	55719	36870	Thailand	16579	30000
Kuwait	04928	03041	Turkey	26386	17530
Libya	12026	81500	UAE	53917	18725

UK		Germany		US		Japan	
Base	700%	Discount	2.50%	Prime	8.50%	Discount	0.50%
France		Lombard	4.50%	Discount	5.00%	Belgium	
Intervention	3.10%	Canada		Fed Funds	5.44%	Discount	2.50%
Italy		Prime	5.25%	Spain		Central	3.00%
Discount	6.25%	Discount	3.75%	10-d Repo	5.00%	Switzerland	
Netherlands		Denmark		Sweden		Discount	1.00%
So-Advance	3.00%	Discount	3.25%	Repo (Ave)	4.10%	Lombard	3.38%

Country	3 mth	chg	1 yr	chg	2 yr	chg	5 yr	chg	10 yr	chg
Australia	4.85	0.00	4.84	0.01	4.85	0.04	5.65	0.13	6.11	0.28
Belgium	3.63	0.06	3.82	0.08	4.10	0.00	4.90	0.00	5.50	0.07
Canada	4.85	0.00	4.85	0.00	4.85	0.00	4.95	0.00	6.50	0.00
ECU	4.36	0.01	4.53	0.00	4.50	0.00	5.04	0.00	5.00	0.00
France	0.00	0.00	3.81	0.00	3.86	0.00	4.78	0.01	5.42	0.00
Germany	3.41	0.00	3.78	0.00	4.04	0.00	4.91	0.00	5.50	0.00
Italy	4.85	0.00	4.85	0.00	4.85	0.00	5.61	0.04	6.08	0.00
Japan	0.04	-0.03	0.48	0.00	0.57	-0.01	1.16	-0.04	1.94	-0.08
Netherlands	3.47	-0.01	3.88	0.00	4.09	-0.03	4.14	0.00	5.42	0.00
Spain	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.91	0.00	5.50	0.00
Sweden	4.04	-0.02	4.42	0.00	4.75	0.00	5.43	0.00	5.97	-0.01
Switzerland	1.63	0.03	1.91	0.03	1.77	0.07	2.85	0.05	3.45	0.02
UK	6.88	0.00	7.51	0.00	8.93	0.03	6.47	0.08	8.30	0.22

	Overnight	1 week	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year
Treasury Bills			700 6.88	700 6.88		
LIBOR						
Domestic Depos	706 719	706 719	713 719	725 731	734 741	747 753
Eurosterling Deps	716 725	713 719	719 725	725 731	734 741	747 753
Eligible Bank Bils			703 697	718 706	736 708	
Sterling CDs			716 709	728 722	731 725	741 734

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Settlement Price: 5305.60										
Series	Oct				Nov		Dec		Jan	
	Call	Imp	Vol	Put	Call	Put	Call	Put	Call	Put
5250	207	24	18	21	283	73	339	99	367	120
5300	163	23	27	20	246	86	307	113	331	136
5350	125	26	40	19	211	112	268	130	302	156

Commodity Indices		Goldman Sachs		5:30pm		
	Base date	Last	Chg	%Chg	31 Dec	%ChgYTD
Index	1970 = 100	202.93	-0.8	-0.09	215.26	-5.73
Agricultural	1970 = 100	237.24	2.83	1.25	232.23	2.60
Energy	1983 = 100	77.79	-0.31	-0.40	85.86	-9.40
Industrials	1977 = 100	176.44	0.00	0.00	168.79	4.53
Int. Metals	1970 = 100	77.67	-1.90	-1.06	81.03	-7.26
Emer. Mkt. Ind.	1970 = 100	229.6				

Brent Crude(\$/barrel)				Gas oil(\$/tonne)				WTI Crude(\$/barrel)				Products(\$/tonne)			
IPE	Close	Chg	Vol	IPE	Close	Chg	Vol	NYM	Last	Chg	Spot	CIF	NW	Eur	
Nov	2065	0.05	15820	Oct	184.00	-0.75	7274	Oct	1960	196.0	Gasoline	95	205.00		
Dec	2062	0.14	1267	Nov	185.50	-0.75	7377	Nov	22.10	0.10	Naphtha		210.00		

LME (\$/tonne)	Cash	Chg	3 month	Chg	LME stocks	Chg		
Aluminium HG	1635.5	1636.5	-1600	1642	1643	-17	725050	3300
Aluminium Alloy	1435	1445	-500	1460	1470	-5	49580	-80
Copper A	2052	2054	-3000	2078	2080	-30	338525	-225
Lead	598.5	599.5	300	612	613	3	100590	-50
Nickel	6545	6555	-4000	6580	6585	-40	61968	908
Tin	5750	5755	000	5785	5785	-5	11225	-100
Zinc	1296	1297	200	1300	1300	-30	100000	0

pm fix/\$ per oz			pm fix/£ per oz			Coins (\$)				
	Day's chg	Year's chg		Day's chg	Year's chg		Day's chg	Yr's chg		
Platinum	425.00	100	40.00	Platinum	261.40	-116	148.5	Kruggerands	329.96	-439.95
Palladium	125.00	100	75.50	Palladium	189.95	-015	44.40	Sovs.	77.46	
Silver	5.18	0.10	0.32	Silver	2.19	-0.07	0.09	Nobles	418.05	
Gold	211.96	4.16	0.14							

Cocoa		Coffee		Barley		Potatoes		Lge Potatoes	
LUFFE	Etienne	LUFFE	Etienne	LUFFE	Etienne	LUFFE	Etienne	Ata	22kg
Dec97	1466.00	Nov/97	16-100	Nov/97	80.05	Nov/97	61.00	Nov/97	682.00
Mar/98	1855.00	Jan/98	165.00	Jan/98	83.55	Mar/98	54.00	Feb/98	665.00
May/98	184.00	Mar/98	136.00	Mar/98	85.50	Apr/98	101.00	Apr/98	671.00
Vol:	3281	Vol:	3254	Vol:	220	Vol:	47	Vol:	0

Oct97	31600	Oct97	140000	Nov97	8705	Dec97	27450	Nov97	2300
Dec97	30150	Nov97	149000	Jan98	3900	Mar98	28300	Jan98	-
Mar98	30900	Jan98	150000	Mar98	9100	May98	28875	Mar98	1370
Vol:	2363	Vol:	191	Vol:	413	Vol:	0	Vol:	134

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Christian Dailly relaxes at Derby County's Pride Park stadium where his consistent appearances in defence have helped his Scotland career

Photograph: Peter Jay

Dailly grind can bring World Cup reward

Christian Dailly may enjoy rock festivals but, as Phil Shaw discovered, next summer he would rather get his fix of that special atmosphere created by crowds of fans singing and swaying, by playing in front of Scotland's Tartan Army at the World Cup finals.

Footballers, according to the stereotype, holiday in Ibiza and regard Elton John as the adventurous end of a musical spectrum that starts with "Lady in Red". Outmoded and unfair as the image may be, Christian Dailly still stands out as an odd-ball.

As his contemporaries jetted off to Florida or the Caribbean at the end of an arduous season, Derby County's Scottish defender also headed west. Where he was bound, however, there were no rounds of cocktails or golf, no sunbaths and no sun. Dailly's idea of getting away

from it all was to stand in a farmer's rain-lashed field in Somerset for three days having his senses assaulted.

This year's Glastonbury rock festival took place in what he describes as "knee-high mud". Conditions were so bad that his brother and the two friends with whom they attended were taking half an hour to wade from one stage to another. Dailly, having played on the treacherous morass that was the Baseball Ground, jokes that he needed only five minutes to move between gigs.

His summing up of the festival ritual - "watch bands all day, lie in the tent at night" - confirms him as, well, different (though he is considered a good mixer rather than an outsider in the Graeme Le Saux mould). Surely, I suggest, a highly paid sportsman would prefer his creature comforts? "A hotel?" Dailly gasps, mortified. "No way! I'd never do that."

The side of Dailly that reveres Oasis and The Verve would love to return to "Glas-to" next summer: he even pre-

sented one of his Scotland jerseys to John Squire, late of his beloved Stone Roses and now playing up front with The Seahorses.

Yet his professional and patriotic side fervently hopes he will have a prior engagement, a four-yearly festival which also commands large crowds of singing, swaying people: the World Cup finals.

Barring freak results, Scotland will book their passage to France if they beat Latvia in Glasgow on Saturday. Dailly, who is in line for his fifth cap, reflects the cautious optimism that characterises Craig Brown's meticulous style of management.

"Belarus were a decent side with a lot of guys who play for top Russian clubs," Dailly said. "Latvia are above them so we expect a tough match. But Craig will do his usual thorough briefing on their tactics and players. And if someone had said at the start of the campaign that we'd qualify if we beat Latvia at home, we'd have settled for that."

The former Dundee United player, who will be 24 this month, may be a relative novice in senior international terms but he is no stranger to the global stage. Breaking into his hometown team at 16, he was promptly called into Brown's Under-21 squad and went on to gain 34 caps, a world record at that level.

"I'm not sure if it's such a good record to have," Dailly admits. "If I'd never made the 'big' team it wouldn't have meant that much, but I was determined to get in. I was on the bench once, as a striker away to Estonia in 1993, though it wasn't until this year that I was picked again."

"The two Colins [Hendry and Calderwood] were out, which gave me a chance in the friendlies against Wales and Malta, where I scored. I stayed in against Belarus in Minsk and again at Aberdeen last month."

The catalyst in Dailly's breakthrough was a £1m transfer to Derby 16 months ago. Out of contract, he had talks with PSV Eindhoven, Cagliari, Celta

Vigo, Coventry and Manchester City before a combination of Jim Smith's plans for him and a desire to inflict minimal upheaval on his young family led him to the East Midlands.

"It was the best thing all round, because United also got some money they wouldn't have had if I'd gone abroad under the Bosman ruling. I ended up making more appearances than anyone at the club, and if you're doing well in the Premiership you're bound to get noticed. Craig invited me to a winter get-together for his Anglo-Scots and told me then I hadn't been forgotten."

The fact that Smith gave him a settled role furthered Dailly's international ambitions. At Tannadice he played "right-back one week, left wing the next, then centre-forward and after that centre-half". He feared he was becoming more than useful in several positions but excelling in none.

"Sometimes you need a move to develop. There's a few who've come from United and established themselves in Eng-

land - Kevin Gallacher, Duncan Ferguson and Billy McKinlay spring to mind - which tells you something about the coaching we received there."

Derby's squad is as cosmopolitan as they come, containing Danes, Dutchmen, Italians, Croats, Estonians, Costa Ricans and even the odd Englishman. But, explains Dailly, the treadmill of domestic fixtures allows little time for dwelling on the prospects for France '98, except when a player returns from some far-flung match, as Jamaica's Deon Burton did on Monday.

Pride Park's solitary Scotcum-member of the Woodstock nation will be excused for making sure everyone hears about it if Latvia are vanquished. As part of a younger generation that Brown has been easing into place, Dailly may have the opportunity to play in other World Cups. But the sound of Celtic Park acclaiming Scotland's advance would be music to his ears: as Oasis might have said, he is mud for it.

Earle keen to show that England's loss is Jamaica's gain

After waiting for a call from Glenn Hoddle which never came, Robbie Earle turned his attention elsewhere and now looks to be heading for the World Cup finals. John Carlin talked to him in Washington.

It is not too often in football that a player gets called up for his first international cap when he is in his thirties. Wimbledon's Robbie Earle was in Glenn Hoddle's reckoning last season and came very close to making it into the England squad.

Earle, who was 32 in January, was dying to be picked. In an interview with the *Independent* in April, he said he jumped whenever his mobile phone rang. "It'd be my mum and I'd say: 'Get off the line in case Glenn's trying to get through'."

The call never came. And yet now it seems that, with a little bit of luck, he will be going to the World Cup finals in France next year, playing not for England but for Jamaica, whose squad he joined in June.

Jamaica are second behind Mexico in the Concacaf group, from which three qualify, after drawing with the United States in Washington on Friday. One point from their last two games should see them through.

How did it come about that he became a Jamaican player? "I was sort of on the standby list a couple of times for England last year, so obviously I was waiting to see if anything happened," he said. "Meantime, the Jamaican Football Federation spoke to me - this was something that was always in the background because both my parents are from Jamaica - and come the summer nothing had happened really on the England scene."

"I think the *Tournoi de France* was the turning point. Glenn Hoddle brought in some young players there and it looked as though there wasn't going to be any opportunity internationally at that level, so I decided to go with Jamaica."

Earle does not sound very Jamaican. He sounds as if he comes from, well, the place where he was born. Newcastle-under-Lyme. Watching him train with the Jamaican squad for the United States game, his manner seemed decidedly English.

Under the Brazilian coach, Rene Simoes, the fitness training included a rhythmic clap and jump routine which spurred some of the younger players into a sort of calypso frenzy.

Earle followed the moves but he was not going to win any dancing prizes. To be fair, he had a bad knee which ruled him out of the game in

Washington. But, generally, where his Jamaican teammates were coltishly exuberant, he was quiet and restrained - a gently spoken philosopher-footballer who keeps his head while all around are going bananas.

Not entirely unlike the role he plays with the Crazy Gang, which is one reason why the transition from Wimbledon to Jamaica had proved, he said, something of a home from home.

"There are similarities in that it's a small nation, we're a small club. There's a lot of team spirit and camaraderie, which is similar to Wimbledon. Jamaica's a smaller nation trying to get a bigger identity and that's something I've known since I've been at Wimbledon. So it's been quite an even transition, to be honest."

He was being honest because at that very instant one of his team-mates, a wild-eyed Vinnie Jones type, walked behind him and gave him a gratuitous shove in the back. Without batting an eyelid, without any visible break in his thought process, if only showing perhaps a flicker of a smile, he kept talking.

"I thought it might be slightly more difficult, but they've taken to us well. The results have gone quite well. We hope we've added something to the squad. Maybe a little bit of experience, a little bit of professionalism."

The "we" refers to himself and three other England-based players in the Jamaican squad: Fitzroy Simpson and Paul Hall of Portsmouth, and Deon Burton of Derby County, who has scored the decisive goals in Jamaica's last three World Cup outings.

Earle came on as a substitute in two 1-0 victories over Canada and Costa Rica last month and hopes to be fit for what promises to be a huge game against El Salvador on 9 November.

The question was whether Earle, a Jamaican for barely three months, had acquired any genuine stirrings of national pride. "You do get a sense of pride," he said. "Obviously I'm Engl-". He checked himself just in time, betraying his obviously ambiguous feelings, before continuing.

"I was born in England, so my first choice would have been England. I'm not going to deny that. But you do feel a sense of pride and a sense of trying to create a little bit of history for a country. It's almost like being able to put something back in a nation that wouldn't get this kind of attention otherwise."

From someone else that "putting something back" stuff might have sounded corny. From Robbie Earle's lips, it sounded totally sincere. If, in the autumn of his footballing years, he was his shot at glory in France next year, it couldn't happen to a nicer man.



Earle: 'A feeling of trying to create a little bit of history'

Claridge to leave Leicester

Steve Claridge, whose Wembley play-off goal took Leicester City into the Premiership two seasons ago, has been made available for transfer after failing to win a regular place in the side this season.

The 31-year-old former Birmingham City and Cambridge United striker has seen his opportunities reduced since the signings of Tony Cottee and Graham Fenton. Claridge has had amicable talks with the Leicester manager, Martin O'Neill, who will now listen to offers.

"The manager and fans have been great to me and it will be a shame to leave," Claridge said. "However, I need regular first-team football and will consider any move."

O'Neill is apparently ready to move for the former German international centre-back. Dietmar

Beiersdorfer. The 32-year-old flew in yesterday for talks about joining on a free transfer from the Italian side, Reggiana.

The club's chairman, Tom Smeaton, has promised to respond to O'Neill's demand for money to strengthen his squad. The club float on the Stock Exchange later this month and Smeaton said: "We're hoping to take in £1.2m and the money will go in all directions."

"Money for players has been my policy since I became chairman and I can assure Martin that nothing has changed. I've never given a set figure - but it will certainly be a substantial sum."

The recuperating England winger Steve Stone has signed a new four and a half year contract with the First Division leaders, Nottingham Forest.

Huddersfield opt for double act

Terry Yorath, the former Wales manager, yesterday revealed that he turned down the job of Huddersfield manager, preferring instead to be Town's new first-team coach.

The new manager is the untried and untested Peter Jackson, who up until the weekend was playing as a centre-back with the Vauxhall Conference club Halifax Town. But Halifax are to report Huddersfield to the Football Association over their approach to Jackson, which they say was illegal.

The two men, who will work without contracts, take over at the First Division's club from Brian Horton, who was sacked as manager on Monday along with his backroom staff.

Bryan Richardson, the Coventry chairman, has asked the Football Association to show video evidence to referee Peter Jones, who sent off Dáin Dublin at Blackburn 10 days ago.

Dublin was dismissed for violent conduct against Colin Hendry, but television pictures showed that there was no contact by the striker's arm. Hendry himself is apparently willing to speak on Dublin's behalf.

Walsall have escaped any action by the FA following two pitch invasions during their Coca-Cola Cup tie with Nottingham Forest at Bescot Stadium last month. A number of fans went onto the pitch to celebrate Andy Watson's winner in extra time and hundreds ran on again at the final whistle.

The Blackburn defender Gary Croft has signed a new four-year contract with the club.

Giggs likely to lead Wales

Ryan Giggs is favourite to be named Wales' captain for their final World Cup qualifier in Belgium on Saturday, but it will only be a one-match appointment.

Gould needs to decide on a new captain because Gary Speed, who led the side for the first time in Turkey last month, is suspended. Mark Hughes, who would almost certainly have been next in line to lead his country, is also suspended.

If he is chosen, the Manchester United winger would become the second-youngest Welsh captain in history, after Mike England who was given the honour when he was 22.

Gould said: "I don't want to make any announcement just yet. I hear what is being said about Ryan, but we don't fly out to Belgium until Thursday and

we have a couple more training sessions before then."

The Republic of Ireland captain, Andy Townsend, has pulled out of the World Cup game against Romania on Saturday.

The 33-year-old Middlesex-born midfielder is to have a scan after a knee injury in the First Division game against Sheffield United on Sunday.

Tommy Wright and Danny Griffin are out of Northern Ireland's squad for Saturday's World Cup qualifier in Portugal. Wright, the Manchester City goalkeeper, has suffered a recurrence of a persistent thigh strain. Griffin, the St Johnstone full-back, has an ankle problem.

The manager, Bryan Hamilton, brings in Chester defender Iain Jenkins and the Blackburn goalkeeper Alan Fettes.

FIXTURES AND FORECASTS

Nationwide Football League
First Division
1 Reading v Crewe
2 Stockport v Oxford Utd
3 Swindon v Bury
Playing: Sunderland, Birmingham v Wolves, Stoke v Port Vale

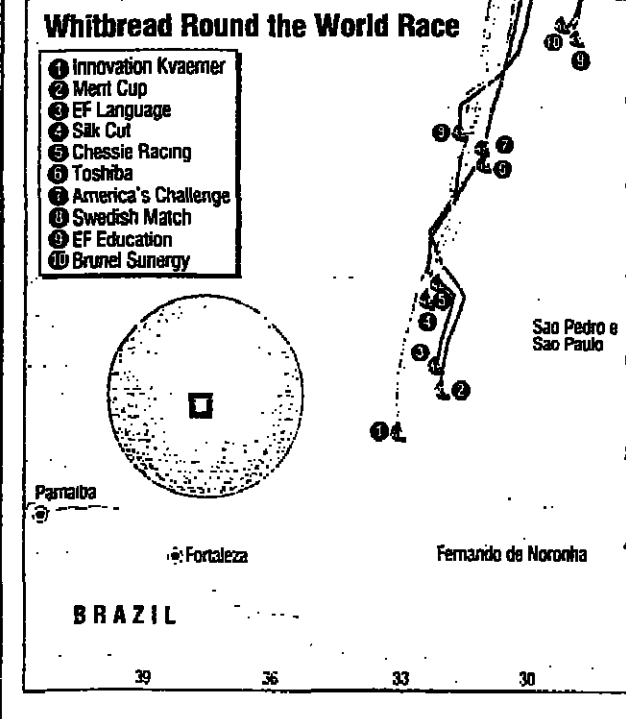
Second Division
4 Burnley v Carlisle
5 Chesterfield v Wigan
6 Fulham v Blackpool
7 Gillingham v Wycombe
8 Grimsby v Northampton
9 Millwall v Oldham
10 Preston v Bournemouth
11 Southend v Brentford
12 York v Brentford
Also playing (not on coupons): Luton v Plymouth, Walsall v Wrexham

Third Division
13 Chester v Brighton
14 Doncaster v Hartlepool
15 Hull v Scarborough
16 Leyton Orient v Rotherham
17 Lincoln v Torquay
18 Mansfield v Cambridge
19 Notts County v Macclesfield
20 Peterborough v Colchester
21 Rochdale v Darlington
22 Shrewsbury v Barnet
23 Slough v Slough
Also playing (not on coupons): Cardiff v Scunthorpe, Exeter v Swindon

GM Vauxhall Conference
24 Barnborough v Morecambe
25 Cheltenham v Slough
26 Northwich v Hednesford

26 Rushden v Hereford
27 Southport v Kidderminster
Also playing (not on coupons): Gateshead v Leek, Stevenage v Woking

World Cup qualifiers
28 Greece v Denmark
29 Slovenia v Croatia
30 Georgia v Poland
31 Italy v England
32 Finland v Hungary
33 Switzerland v Azerbaijan
34 Austria v Belarus
35 Czech Republic v Slovakia
36 Scotland v Latvia
37 Cyprus v Luxembourg
38 Russia v Bulgaria
39 Czech Republic v Slovakia
40 Malta v Yugoslavia
41 Spain v Faroe Isles
42 Belgium v Wales
43 Netherlands v Turkey
44 Iceland v Liechtenstein
45 Macedonia v Lithuania
46 Republic of Ireland v Romania
47 Armenia v Ukraine
48 Germany v Albania
49 Portugal v Northern Ireland
Also playing (not on coupons): Bell's Scottish League Third Division: Ross County v Queens Park
Four draws: Shrewsbury v Barnet, Northwich v Hednesford, Italy v England, Macedonia v Lithuania
Five away: Northampton, Cambridge United, Morecambe, Denmark, Yugoslavia, Ten homes: Reading, Swindon, Fulham, Chester, Peterborough, Switzerland, Scotland, Spain, Northwich, Germany



Gloomy forecast leaves Merit Cup in depression

After 17 days at sea, the leaders in the Whitbread Round the World Race are approaching half-way on the first leg to Cape Town, but, as Stuart Alexander explains, the weather still shows no sign of lending the fleet a helping hand.

A favourable wind remains a pipe dream for the 10-boat Whitbread fleet, with Grant Dalton in Merit Cup forecasting a long haul upwind while heading down the coast of South America.

"We have just received a long-range forecast which has made a couple of the guys question their desire to continue living," said Dalton yesterday, as Merit Cup was reaching towards the island of Fernando de Noronha. "It's going to be hard on the wind after the island and on down to the next mark, the Ilha da Trindade off southern Brazil, and beyond."

"The South Atlantic high is in the southern ocean, spinning south-east winds off the top of it, and it's forecast to stay there. This is not good."

Although Dalton's decision to switch direction early in the hope of finding a more favourable line to the Brazil-

ian coast paid off when he regained second place from Paul Cayard's EF Language, it has doubled the distance Dalton is behind the race leader, Knut Frostad, in Kvaerner.

The Norwegian, whose 48-mile advantage will take a lot of hard work to whittle down, was beating upwind into 15 to 20 knots and big waves. "The boat is taking a serious hammering," Frostad reported, "but seems to handle it well."

Also working upwind is the British entry Silk Cut, with Lawrie Smith having established a comfort zone in fourth place, 16 miles from Mark Fisher on Chessie Racing in fifth. However, the 153 miles by which Smith trails Frostad

is a big, though not impossible, challenge.

For the first time since they left the Solent on 21 September, the women's crew of EF Education, skippered by Christine Gifford, have moved off the bottom.

The last boat is now Brunel Sunergy, as Hans Bouschotte plays a cautious game after losing two feet off his rudder in a collision with a whale.

WHITBREAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE (first leg, 7,350 miles, Southampton to Cape Town) Latest positions: 1 Merit Cup (Grant Dalton) 2 EF Language (Paul Cayard) 3 EF Education (Christine Gifford) 4 Silk Cut (Lawrie Smith) 5 Chessie Racing (Mark Fisher) 6 Toshiba (Stuart Alexander) 7 American Challenge (Stuart Alexander) 8 Swedish Match (Stuart Alexander) 9 EF Education (Christine Gifford) 10 Brunel Sunergy (Hans Bouschotte) +545

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Ince the enforcer determined to play out his final summer in France

Paul Ince's experience of playing in Italy could prove hugely influential for England in Saturday's World Cup qualifier. Mike Rowbottom hears how 'The Guv'nor' hopes to rule in Rome.

Glenn Hoddle will not have it that the match against Italy represents the last chance for England players such as Paul Ince to sample what he refers to as the "crème de la crème" – the World Cup finals.

England's coach pointed out the fact yesterday that Franco Baresi played in the last World Cup final for Italy at 36. "If you are good enough at 18 or 36 you have got a chance in my squad," he said.

Encouraging sentiments for Ince, who turns 30 on 21 October. But he is not wholly convinced. "For me and a few others this is probably the last chance of playing in the World Cup finals," he said. "It's a big game that I want to win."

"The Guv'nor", as he has come to be known in a career that has taken him from West Ham to Manchester United to

Internazionale to Liverpool, knows what it feels like to fail at this stage of the competition. He was a member of the England side who missed qualifying for the 1994 finals when they lost 2-0 to the Netherlands in Rotterdam.

"It was a big disappointment to get beaten by Holland," he said. "But at the back of my mind I thought maybe I would be in the same situation in four years' time. And now here we are."

Ince's combative, assuring presence in front of the defence is likely to be one of the most influential factors in England carrying out Hoddle's stated

aim of settling to play as naturally as possible.

That will not be an easy proposition in front of a partisan 80,000 crowd, but the prospect does not faze a player who has come through barages of Italian abuse – some of it racist – in his time.

His two years abroad was also sufficient for him to absorb the Italian way of footballing life, with all its smoothness and roughness.

"I know the Italian mentality," he said. "If they can stop a player like Gazza in our half rather than theirs, they will."

"When I was at Milan, the

coach, Ottavio Bianchi, said to me 'If you don't get the ball, get the player – and do it further up their part of the field than ours.'"

"He didn't mean take him out with a two-footed tackle. Nothing malicious like that. Just something like blocking. The little tricks."

Ince knows his reception is likely to be predominantly hostile, but he faces the prospect with the easy confidence he demonstrated 11 days ago at Upton Park, when he laughed off the unrelenting boos and catcalls of a West Ham crowd still resentful at the manner of his departure eight years ago.

That confidence has been underpinned by experience. He was a success in Italy, where other Brits have failed. And he now has a more secure position in the national side than he had under the previous manager, Terry Venables, who dropped him for a year after Ince had pulled out of the Umbro Cup squad in the summer of 1995.

Although Ince fitted back into the national side, he found it more difficult when he returned from Inter to play for Liverpool this season.

"It took me quite a while to adjust to the pace," he said. "In Italy it's like, slow, slow, slow

then quick in the final quarter. In English football it's quick, quick, quicker, quicker."

The pace of his life may be frenetic, but Ince is now steady himself before one of the highest hurdles in his career.

"We have got to go out and do the business in Rome," he said. "We had a good chance against Holland. We had a chance against Germany in Euro 96. Now we have another chance – and I think we are stronger and better equipped this time."

"When we beat Italy in the Tournoi, we had changed a lot of our squad but they were only



Ince: 'Saturday is a big game that I very much want to win'

missing Maldini, and we were comfortable. "They got beat and that hurt them. You can't forget that. That will be in their minds and it will be in ours."

Gascoigne's change of focus sharpens England's sights

With three days to go to England's final World Cup qualifier in Rome, the spotlight is inevitably being turned on Paul Gascoigne. Will his return to Rome, where he played for Lazio, end in joy or tears?

Problems may await Gascoigne, but Glenn Hoddle, the national coach, believes he is bound for glory. Glenn Moore was at Bisham Abbey to hear him explain why.

According to the Italian press, if Paul Gascoigne returned to play for Lazio tomorrow they would sell 40,000 season tickets overnight. According to some of the English press, it is not only his former fans who are awaiting his return to Rome today – a photographer armed with a writ over an alleged assault and the Italian tax office also have a reputed interest from Gascoigne's Roman period.

Glenn Hoddle whose preparations have already been disrupted by Les Ferdinand's withdrawal with a recurrence of his stomach muscle injury, refused to discuss either matter yesterday, saying: "They are private." It is clear, however, that he is anxious that Gascoigne is not distracted.

In the past, the 30-year-old has had a habit of becoming over-hyped for key matches, notably the 1991 FA Cup Final which ended with him in hospital, and they do not get much bigger than a return to Rome for a World Cup qualifying decider.

As Paul Ince noted: "He missed a lot of games in Italy and he will be anxious to show what he can do." So far, however, Gascoigne has seemed calmer and Hoddle wants to keep it that way.

"I made sure we had a good chat when he arrived on Sunday to talk about the Moldova game. The way he approached that game was different. I'd not seen him prepare like that before. He was more focused, quieter – a lot quieter – and then he performed. He has learned a lot from that."

"Even the reaction after his goal [against Moldova], and the interview he had after was not the normal Gazza. I think it was the Gazza that is needed at this stage of his career and I think that will help in preparing for this game. I don't think he will get too carried away with the hype – he knows if we are going to get a result it will be a team effort."

As if to underline this, Gascoigne was not one of the players whose exuberance led Hoddle to cut short Monday's training session.

"He was playing with his head, not his heart," Hoddle said. "I think he is understanding that has reached a stage where, if he adapts, he can add something to his game."

"He was a great runner with the ball, still is at times, but the balance now involves playing some excellent one and two-touch football. He is doing that more and more in training and it will make him an even better player."

"The injuries have changed him, and he has grown up. People do. The chaps we had had over a period of time have sunk in. He was always going to need time, but he is now learning about himself and being a footballer."

"I'm a firm believer that if you look after body and mind, you can play until you are 35 or 36 – if you adjust your game. One point is that this is his longest period of time in many years without a major injury. In the past he nearly always joined England when he was recovering from an injury."

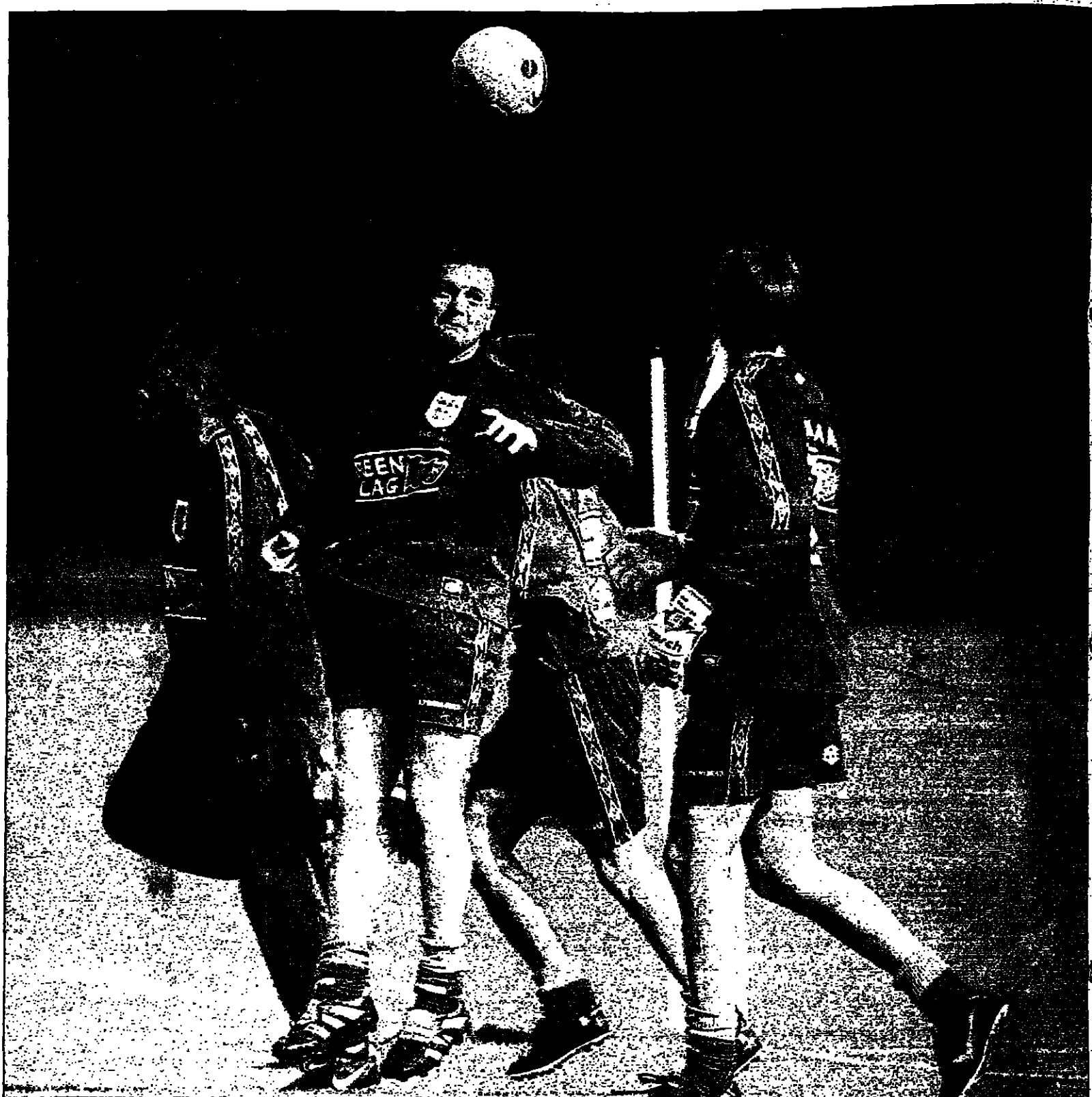
This, of course, presumes that Gascoigne will play in Rome. Given Hoddle's support, it is hard to imagine he will not, although David Beckham or Steve McManaman could be handed the role of midfield creator.

Neither seems likely, although Hoddle did caution "if selected" when asked if he thought Italy would man-mark Gascoigne. He added: "Not if they play the midfield I expect them to, though in a way, I hope they do." Was this mind games for the Italian press corps, or was it based on solid tactics?

Hoddle has the same quandary over Gianfranco Zola as Cesare Maldini, the Italian coach, has over Gascoigne and he said: "To man-mark you have to reshape the team and I don't want to do that, but whether Zola is playing well or below par, you always feel that he can turn a game with a moment of magic. In a game that I don't think will see many chances, he is obviously a major threat."

"But we also have players who can create magic – Gascoigne, Steve McManaman, Paul Scholes, Ian Wright. It is hard to stop because often the player doesn't even know how they do it. It is instinctive, you can't coach it. It is whether you can bring it out of them at the moment it is needed."

Hoddle, who still has 23 fit players, will not replace Ferdinand, who was sent back to Tottenham after a scan revealed further problems with his ongoing stomach injury.



Air time: Paul Gascoigne heads for Rome during England training Photograph: Peter Jay

tenham after a scan revealed further problems with his ongoing stomach injury.

The club will then decide whether he needs another operation or further rest. "It's a blow," said Hoddle but, in truth, it is more of a blow to Gerry Francis, the Tottenham manager. Ferdinand does offer

England a different option, but he would only have started on the bench on Saturday. "I'm happy with what I've got," Hoddle said.

Altered state for Souness

Graeme Souness' three-month reign as manager of Torino ended yesterday, but he is staying on at the club to help in the Italian club's "strategic development", although what that role entails is unclear.

Massimo Vidalich, the Torino president, confirmed Souness' departure yesterday morning before announcing the appointment of the former Brescia manager Edoardo Reja. Souness, who resigned as manager of Southampton in

May, said he remained committed to the Italian club and had taken on a different role. "When I accepted the position at Torino, I realised there was a very difficult job to be done," he said.

"The club had brought in 15 new players before I arrived. But, despite this, I was confident that, given sufficient time, I would achieve the sort of success that this great club and its supporters deserve. The board has now decided to pursue a new course. I remain committed to

the club and I have, therefore, agreed with the board that I will now take a wider role in strategic development of Torino."

The tenacious nature of Souness' new role has fuelled reports that he could return to Ibrox and link up with his former Rangers assistant, Walter Smith, although this was denied yesterday by the Rangers chairman, David Murray. Smith replaced Souness in 1991, when the former Scotland captain moved to Liverpool as manager.

CRICKET

China among targets for expansion plans

Australian and New Zealand cricket chiefs are to target China, Japan and other Asia-Pacific countries in an attempt to find new nations to play the sport.

The Australian Cricket Board's chief executive, Malcolm Speed, outlined the project at the launch of the new season Down Under at the Melbourne Cricket Ground yesterday.

"This is part of the International Cricket Council's push to make cricket a global game," he said. "We are looking at a number of potential

countries where we might seek to develop the game, and these include China and Japan, where the huge populations are a big attraction."

"The first stage will be to get some professional development officers and coaches into countries to put infrastructures in place."

Australia's captain, Mark Taylor, used the occasion to appeal to the ACB to resist appointing separate captains for Tests and limited-overs games, as he thinks the position should be regarded as "sacred".

Glamorgan, the county champions, have been awarded a grant of £3.2m towards the construction of a centre of cricketing excellence at their Sophia Gardens headquarters in Cardiff.

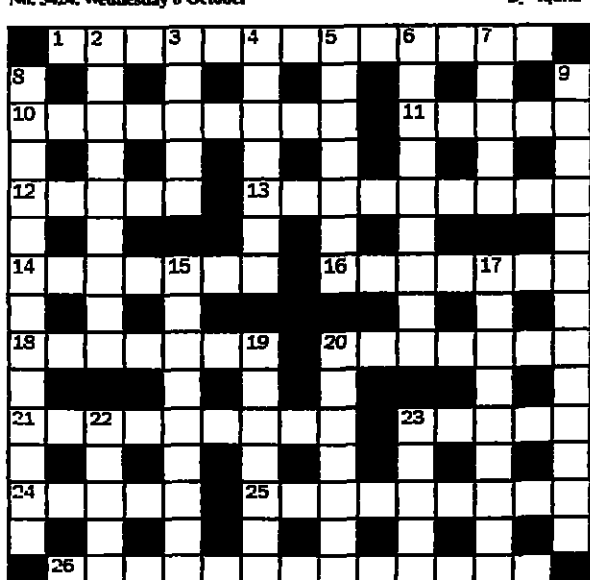
The grant, more than double the previous highest amount awarded by the Sports Lottery Foundation for Wales, will pay for an indoor cricket hall, comprising seven practice nets with back-up equipment to videotape players' performances, and is part of a planned £20m redevelopment.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3424, Wednesday 8 October

By Aquila

Tuesday's Solution



ACROSS
1 Old Bill, according to Carroll? (6,7)
10 List tunes arranged for plucky musicians (9)
11 Note angle of England's slow bowler (5)
12 Short stop for a butterfly (5)
13 Dire stage productions? (9)
14 Armstrong rested, with companion, on near side of moon (7)
16 Italian banker in London street (7)
18 Chap sick taking a cigar (7)
20 One short summer month, new pier displays ornamental shrub (7)
21 Volunteers in the second row (4,5)

DOWN
23 Dysfunctional people are off these waders (5,1)
24 Bellini's girl not entirely typical (5)
25 Precipitation of constable, say, swimming? (8)
26 Laments shanty development in 9, for example (6,2,5)

27 A university fruit given name of one acting routinely (9)
28 Redheads using some of this, then, naughtily? (5)
29 Dish to stir with love, possibly (7)
30 Station everybody supports this month (7)
31 Lothario who may have dangled in a frenzy (6,3)
32 Violin heard in the morning at one? (5)

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